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## GCII's Wild Buffalo stampedes into France's La Mer de Sable



Wild Buffalo from GCII brings fun, family thrills to La Mer De Sable. COURTESY S. CAMBON/LA MER DE SABLE

AT: Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

ERMENONVILLE, France — Sometimes, a signature roller coaster truly puts a park on the map. La Mer de Sable, about an hour northeast of Paris, is a family park with a western theme that opened in 1963. The name of the park translates to "Sea of Sand," and the park's three areas are themed to the American West: The New Mexico Desert, Colorado Canyon and Valley of the Mississippitits. It's sand, horses and cowboys and Indians.

If one wishes to whistle the lyric, "Give me a home

where the buffalo roam," well, **Great Coasters International Incorporated** (GCII) has made that a possibility. The park now has a Wild Buffalo — in the form of a wooden coaster.

"It was about six months on site," said **Clair Hain**, president, GCII. "Our first day on site was October 14, 2024, and the last day was April 24 of this year."

"We wanted a structure that would blend seamlessly into the park's exceptional natural setting — especially since Wild Buffalo is built directly on a sand dune," said **Antoine Lacarrière**, park director. "We were also looking for a ride

that would appeal to our core audience: families. It had to be accessible to as many people as possible (from 1.10 meters, around age 5) and multi-generational so that parents, children and even grandparents could share the experience together."

Compared to gigantic woodies in massive theme parks, the ride's length of 1,643 feet may not be astounding, but it is suitable for the targeted demographic and still offers well over a minute of rollicking fun.

"I find that with wooden

► See BUFFALO, page 6

## Vekoma opens North America's first Tilt Coaster

## Thrilling Siren's Curse descends onto the Cedar Point midway

AT: Tim Baldwin  
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SANDUSKY, Ohio — Building a land of giants, **Cedar Point** has claimed such nicknames as Roller Coaster Capital of the World and America's Roller Coast. The park, perched in the blue waters of Lake Erie, has introduced something North America has never seen. It's a roller coaster genre sure to make hearts race like never before.

On June 28, Siren's Curse officially opened. It is the park's 18th roller coaster and the very first tilt coaster in the Western Hemisphere.

"We've always been proud of the wide variety of coaster types here at Cedar Point. From record-breakers to traditional wooden coasters, we've given our guests many choices over the years," said **Tony Clark**, communications. "Siren's Curse adds a completely new kind of riding experience never seen here. Yes, we have vertical or beyond vertical drops on some of our other coasters, but none like the tilt track on this ride — it's breathtaking."

Built by **Vekoma**, Siren's Curse is the first tilt coaster to appear after the original appeared in Taiwan 23 years ago — and more are being built currently.

"The idea of the tilt coaster originally came up 28 years ago from **Stefan Holtman's** creative mind!" said **Ricardo Tonding Edges**, vice president of sales and marketing, Vekoma. "After the first installation in Taiwan in the early 2000s, there was significant interest in the model. However, with the evolution of the technology and the development of the new trains, Vekoma put that ride

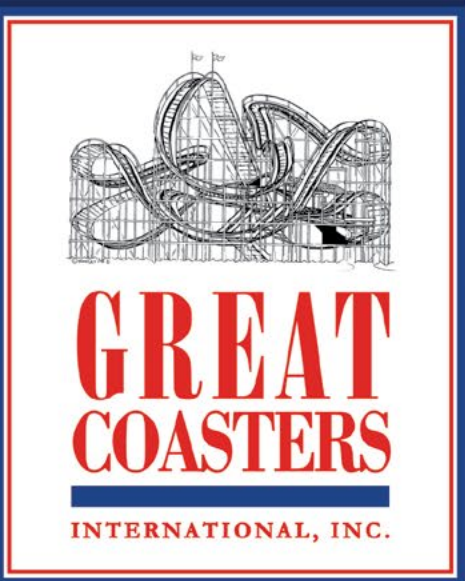
The tilt mechanism makes Siren's Curse unlike any other roller coaster to open in North America.  
COURTESY CEDAR POINT



► See SIREN'S, page 7



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# AMUSEMENT VIEWS



AT NOTEBOOK: John W.C. Robinson, jrobinson@amusementtoday.com

## Affordable family fun



Robinson

It is making headlines across the nation. After a year of the merger of equals between Cedar Fair and Six Flags Corporation, the new theme park mega-company has announced that season passes — bought during an end of summer sale price — for 2026 will be valid at all of the company's North American parks. For the price of a season pass to their local theme park, families now have access to affordable destinations for weekend getaways and vacations like never before.

And the timing could not be better!

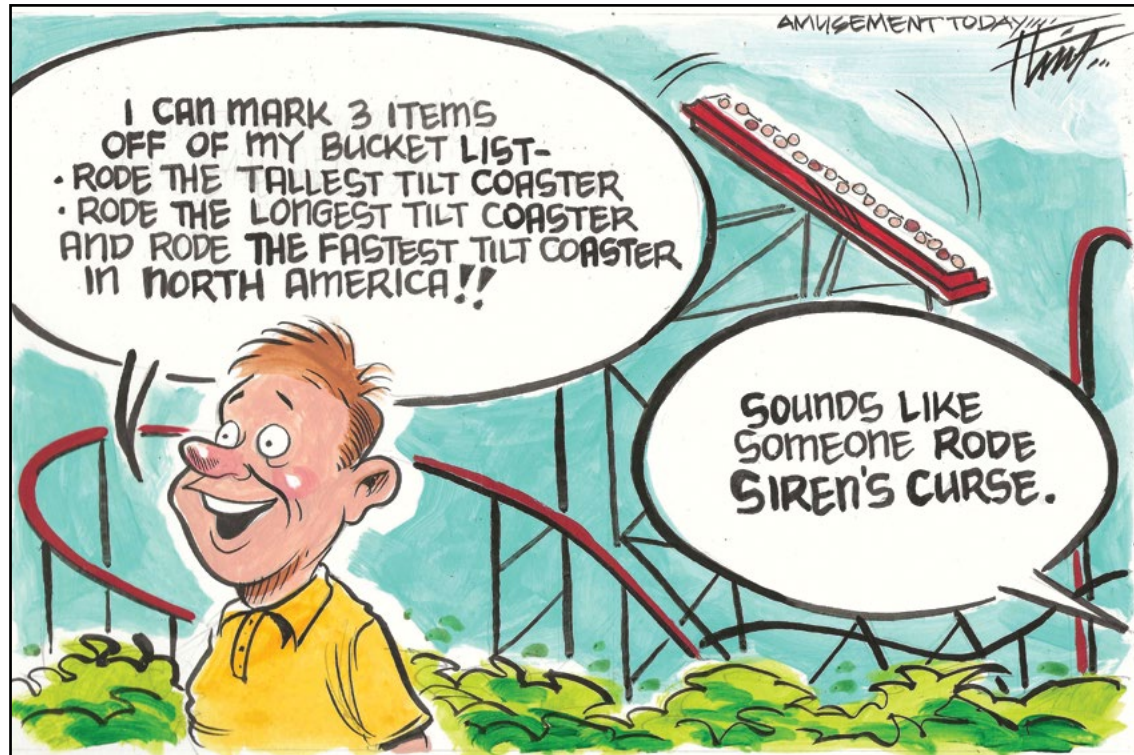
Individually, Six Flags and Cedar Fair offered this perk for years. It was a benefit that I can say from first-hand experience opened a door for many families options and fun. With our Cedar Fair passes in hand from Kings Island, I took my stepkids on a day trip to Michigan's Adventure. We'd do a weekend getaway to Cedar Point. Then, drive eight hours for a family vacation highlighted by a couple days at Kings Dominion. The mutlipark benefit of the passes made family fun truly affordable.

These days, the price of a season pass is comparable (or less) than a single day ticket to a typical Disney theme park. With gas prices still in the \$3 to \$4 per gallon range, budgets being tightened and an air of uncertainty over the economy as a whole, making fun affordable again can offer relief to family budgets while also offering a boost to local tourisms.

However, the most important thing is the return to smiles on our guests faces and a resurgence of families playing together on random weekends away ... perhaps stepping away from the modern onslaught of screens and mobile devices and, instead, enjoying the sugar high of cotton candy, the thrills of a roller coaster and the one-of-a-kind sounds of a park midway.

The return of the multi-park season pass is not the savior of the economy or even our industry, but it opens a gateway for tourism to grow, for families to feel more comfortable with their budgets and for the return of unforgettable road trips.

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint



INDUSTRY VOICE: Chloe Hausfeld, Themed Entertainment Association

## The season changes, the need for collaboration grows

It's hard to believe we're already well into the second half of the year. Time seems to be flying! For many, it marks the close of a busy and (hopefully) fruitful season. It signals the start of what has traditionally been one of the most energizing periods in our industry: the fall season of reconnection, collaboration and momentum-building.

While plenty of us are currently wrestling with the logistics of travel planning, we're also looking ahead to a vibrant slate of industry events. These moments of coming together are more than just dates on the calendar. They're opportunities to exchange ideas, spark innovation, and strengthen the bonds that make this industry so unique.

Collaboration is the only way projects are successful. Whether you're designing immersive experiences, bringing a new park to life, or developing the next big technological breakthrough, it takes trust, teamwork and a shared vision. The strongest projects are built on solid



Hausfeld

partnerships — some rooted in years of experience together, others freshly formed through recent introductions. Both are equally vital.

At TEA, we deeply believe that partnership lies at the heart of everything we do. It drives our mission, shapes our initiatives, and fuels this global community we're proud to be part of. Around the world, we're continuing to foster long-standing relationships, build connections, and create new opportunities for our members to grow, thrive, and lead. Every event we host and attend, every collaboration we support and every door we open is grounded in the core value of working together.

Personally, I'm excited to see what this fall brings — not just in terms of projects and partnerships, but in the energy that comes from being surrounded by passionate, creative people who care deeply about the work they do. And yes, for those of us who celebrate it — fall also brings the return of (American) football. So, I'll proudly say it: "WHO DEY!"

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# 2 MINUTE DRILL

Maegan Wallace, Maclan Corporation



AT: Tim Baldwin

Working in sales and marketing for **Maclan Corporation**, **Maegan Wallace** enjoys her job dealing with roller coaster wheels. Her coworkers appreciate her fun, bubbly personality, noting she is easy to work with and tries to make things simple for other people. Her work with promotional materials, company website and social media make her an integral part of the team. As Maclan is a family-operated company, she has a strong sense of "family," loving her time with her two kids (7 and 8). She describes her son as "typical boy" — into Legos; her daughter is "still into lizards."

**Title:** Sales and Marketing

**Number of years in the industry:** 13

**Best thing about the industry:** The people I work with and the hype, not just the amusement goes out there, but the other companies I work alongside as the people are so fun. I love the constant hype with new innovations.

**Favorite amusement ride:** I just rode Siren's Curse at Cedar Point, so that's top of mind.

**If I weren't working in the amusement industry, I would be ...** oh boy, stay-at-home mom, soccer mom, class mom and probably filming a family reality show — never a dull moment!

**Biggest challenge facing our industry:** Keeping up with the speed and intensity of the rides as they are getting taller and faster — and we must keep safety in mind.

**The thing I like most about amusement/ water park season is ...** finding out where our parts are debuting, as we don't always know when we make them.

**Bedtime snack: sweet or salty?** I guess since cherries and Blow Pops are my current favorite, I would have to say sweet.

**The last time I went swimming was ...** practically every night with the kiddos.

**In a single word, summer is ...** HOT!

**The worst trip I have ever taken was ...** no such thing unless you count being pregnant in Vegas. But my favorite vacation spot was my honeymoon at Jade Mountain in St. Lucia.

**The person who can easily lift my spirits is ...** my hubby, Chad Wallace. Over 20 years of making me smile.



Maclan Corporation's Maegan Wallace enjoyed the thrills of Cedar Point's Siren's Curse on the rides media day. COURTESY MACLAN

**The thing I remember most about the 1990s is ...** going off to college; I had no idea what was ahead, but I was charging full speed toward it.

**If you could play one role in any movie, what would you choose?** Jane Smith, she's a boss.

**In my office, the oldest thing in my desk drawer is ...** my first commission check stub.

**Which would you rather spend time with: a purring kitten or an energetic puppy?** I have an energetic, nine-month-old Vizsla, so it's a vote for the puppy.

**Pick one: a day off completely to yourself or a fancy dinner out?** I do lots of dinners and networking, so I vote for a day completely to myself.

**Favorite airport:** Tampa, it's hands down the best.

**The most outlandish thing I have ever worn is ...** eyewear on a roller coaster: Formula Rossa in Abu Dhabi.

**My bad habit is ...** nail biting. I always have a pair of nail clippers on me and in my car.

**Where are you most ticklish?** Hm. I'm leaving this a secret.

**The game show I would be fantastic at is ...** *Family Feud*.

**The holiday I couldn't care less about is ...** St. Patrick's Day. Besides the green beer, I don't get the hype.

## THE INDUSTRY SEEN

*A family synonymous with fun*



ELYSBURG, Pa. — Knoebels family patriarch Dick Knoebel (second from right) was recently spotted out and about at Knoebels Amusement Resort. He enjoyed some time along the park's midway with family members and friends including (l to r): Leanna Muscato, third generation owner; Rick Knoebel, fourth generation owner; Lauren Muscato, fourth generation owner and Jeannie Reedy, executive assistant. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

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## ► BUFFALO

Continued from page 1

coasters you don't need to have a large footprint or insane drop hill heights to have an enjoyable or even wild ride," said **Olivia Hain**, marketing, GCII. "Wild Buffalo, for example, is a compact family ride but still gives you the butterflies in your stomach like a larger, faster coaster would."

Each train has six rows, for a total of 12 riders per dispatch. The new coaster had the throughput the park was looking for.

"We needed a high-capacity attraction — up to 600 people per hour — to handle visitor flow during peak attendance days," said **Lacarrière**. "A wooden coaster felt like a natural choice — it's an iconic addition to any theme park, and it was the one type of ride we were missing. We were excited to finally bring it to our guests."

A physical height of 49 feet is misleading as the lift climbs a sloped hillside, making for an elevation difference of 74 feet. It's zippy, snappy fun.

"We first unveiled the project to theme park enthusiasts, who immediately showed strong interest and praised our decision to work with GCII as the manufacturer. They closely followed the construction and testing phases and were among the very first to ride Wild Buffalo. Their enthusiastic feedback confirmed we had made the right call," **Lacarrière** told



**Wild Buffalo is the largest roller coaster at La Mer de Sable. Each train has six rows, for a total of 12 riders per dispatch.**  
COURTESY S. CAMBON/LA MER DE SABLE

*Amusement Today*. "As for our general visitors, the response has been overwhelmingly positive. Everyone agrees it was the missing piece at La Mer de Sable. They're absolutely loving it, and the many videos we've shared on social media reflect that excitement."

"My favorite design element in Wild Buffalo is the in-and-out, double-side tunnel," added **Olivia Hain**. "After the second round through the tunnel, there's a couple meters of trick track that add an extra thrill to the ride."

The station is cleverly decorated with wooden stalls, saddle blankets, metal buckets and wicker troughs, along with upside down wooden barrels



serving as light fixtures. It captures a farmhouse feel perfectly. The sculptural ID in front of the entrance has a charging buffalo figure, wooden letters and rock base; it's nicely done.

"The name Wild Buffalo was proposed by the Park Director **Antoine Lacarrière**. It brings the ride to life as a character in its own right and sets the tone for the storytelling that surrounds the attraction," said **Capucine Wacogne**, public relations. "It also served as a creative foundation for the themed entrance and queue design. The name fits perfectly with the overall identity of the park, and particularly with the Color'ado Canyon area where the coaster is located."

"We installed our Millennium Flyer trains. Usually with coasters with small turns and compact footprints, like Wild Buffalo, we would consider the Infinity Flyers, but the coaster's design did not require them," **Clair Hain** told *AT*. "The color theme on the

trains represents the Wild West with the sheriff star badge numbering each car. The two lead cars have buffalo heads bolted onto the knee guards. The park hired a gentleman named **Issam Ejdid**, who carved and airbrushed the two heads. They're pretty incredible to see in person."

**Skyline Design** was responsible for creating the layout.

"The design process for Wild Buffalo was both exciting and challenging," noted **Dustin Sloane**, director of creative process, Skyline. "The goal was to create a memorable ride experience while keeping the ride as compact as possible as it descends the park's unique hillside terrain. The result was a highly custom and precisely integrated layout that includes smooth high-bank curves, numerous airtime moments, a high density of near misses and cross-overs, and even an underground tunnel underneath a walking path. It is a very

kinetic design that I think will be memorable for both riders and onlooking guests and complements the unique charm of La Mer de Sable."

The coaster reaches a top speed of 42 mph and ducks through the ride's structure and underneath a walkway at multiple points.

"When I ride a wooden coaster, I always sit in the back," said **Olivia Hain**. "The back seat is the best seat! Although that still stands true with this coaster, the front seat is actually just as fun. Up front you can feel the wind and force as the trains glide through the turns and in and out of the tunnels."

Wild Buffalo is the fourth coaster at the park. Others are **Tiger Express**, a **Mack Wild Mouse** (2011); **Silver Mountain**, a **Vekoma** junior coaster (2021); and **Bandidos**, an **SBF-Visa** spinning coaster (2016).

When asked if anything had to be removed to make space for the attraction, **Lacarrière** told *AT*: "Wild Buffalo was installed on the site of a former attraction that was dismantled over 15 years ago and had never been replaced. So, no existing rides were removed — on the contrary, our intention was to expand the park's offerings."

The site did present some extra effort.

"The sand absolutely created challenges," **Olivia Hain** shared. "When it rained it was like the whole ground surface changed. But our team did not let anything stop them from coming up with solutions and getting the job done. Most of the guys who built Wild Buffalo had experience working on sand. Some of them built Hala Madrid (previously Bombay Express) in Dubai, and some were recently on site at **Six Flags Qiddiya City** building Colossus."

The ride is reported to have been a €5 million investment.



**A buffalo head graces the front of each train.**  
COURTESY S. CAMBON/LA MER DE SABLE



## Specialist for people movers and dark rides





## ► SIREN'S

Continued from page 1

model on hold for a while in order to redevelop the tilt system in the future. It was only seven years ago when we decided to redevelop the system and bring it up to modern standards of technology. That said, it feels amazing to see the first of this genre up and running and offering fun and joy to so many people."

Most of Cedar Point's coasters are about record-breaking hardware, but Siren's Curse brings in a thematic story and a suitable fit to its waterside location. As riders ascend the lift, chilling melodies from the sea maidens can be heard. At the top of the Lake Erie shipping crane, the music becomes more sinister.

Many coasters have spectator appeal, but this one is perhaps the most pulse-pounding, even for onlookers. As the train approaches the end of what appears to be a broken-off piece of track, it is locked into place. A tilting mechanism brings the train into a 90-degree position, perhaps the most unnerving signature move on any coaster.

"The tilt track on Siren's Curse is an experience all its own," Clark said. "It's as if this coaster has two sections to it: the lift hill and tilt track, then the rest of the actual layout. Coming to the top of the lift, you get a beautiful view of Cedar Point, Sandusky Bay and Lake Erie – with plenty of time to enjoy it. Once you get to the tilt track, everything changes. Riding in the front row is completely different from the last row – I'll go on the record saying that the last row is the most exhilarating on this ride and you need to try it. Hanging there at a 90-degree angle while being taunted by the sounds of the siren is terrifying and fun, all at the same time."

"The back seat is insane when you are hanging up there and you experience more forces on the drop," agreed Tonding Etges. "The front seat is fascinating because you have a clear view of the locking of the seesaw track in the vertical position.



The compact, twisted course is touted for being fluid and smooth. Among the wild elements are two snappy barrel rolls (above left). COURTESY CEDAR POINT

If I have to pick one, I would still go with the back seat."

Cedar Point rates among the top ranks of the coaster elite. Its solid lineup is unquestionable. Five in its arsenal surpass the 200-foot mark, one of which is currently the tallest in the world. To some, a "mere" 160 feet might appear diminutive when placed among behemoths of such stature and only two inversions and 58 mph isn't noteworthy, but such an opinion would be short-sighted. Siren's Curse not only stands on its own as a groundbreaking coaster, but its thrill level is satisfying fans with rave reviews.

"It's my new favorite coaster at the park — and that's saying something," commented **Derek Perry**, communications director, **American Coaster Enthusiasts**. "Siren's Curse is unlike anything I've ever experienced! The sheer thrill of the tilt into that 90-degree first drop, followed by a silky-smooth, airtime-packed ride, is only amplified by the immersive onboard audio. From the chilling tale of what lies below Lake Erie as riders ascend the lift hill to the pulse-pounding second half of the soundtrack, it's a sensory rush from start to finish."

**Maegan Wallace** of **Maclan Corporation**, which supplied the wheels for the train, agreed. "Siren's Curse was *amazing*! Between 'dangle'-time and airtime with a smooth rush, it's my favorite ride!"

Following the twisting, 90-degree plunge, stand-out moments include 13 moments of weightlessness, a high-speed triple-down element and Cedar Point's first below-ground tunnel.

The two zero-G barrel rolls accent the snappy twists and overbanked turns. From an adrenaline perspective, it's top-notch. For almost 3,000 feet, passengers are in for a white-knuckle ride.

"The ride is a full combo of exciting elements. The tilt element is mind-blowing and unique, but the ride is much more than that," said Tonding Etges. "It packs a punch in such a compact layout with quick transitions, lots of airtime, inversions and several track crossings and near-miss effects."

Even furthering the cool factor beyond the onboard sound is the programmable LED lighting on each train.

"This is our first roller coaster with onboard audio and lighting," Clark noted. "The quality of Vekoma's sound system in each car is next level. Speakers are placed on each side of each rider's head while subwoofers occupy space below the seats. When you combine that type of audio quality with a storytelling soundtrack from our XDS creative team, you're not getting 'just another roller coaster' type of ride — it's an immersive journey from beginning to end. With the LED lighting on each car, a night ride on Siren's Curse will not only be excellent for those riding, but for those watching from the midway."

"The software and hardware technologies for the creation of exciting and reliable onboard audio and light systems have evolved tremendously over the last few years and I feel like we are in the forefront of the industry in this aspect," Tonding Etges told *Amusement Today*. "We have developed our own



systems and successfully implemented them in several recent installations worldwide. We worked together with Six Flags' creative team to create the soundtrack for Siren's Curse and perfectly sync with the different parts of the ride — and the result couldn't be better."

The throughput on the ride is respectable, partially because riders have dealt with loose articles before reaching the loading station. Free, double-sided lockers keep the boarding process efficient. Trains can dispatch every 86 seconds, which can meet a capacity of more than 960 passengers an hour.

"Loose articles and personal belongings tend to slow down operations for our ride hosts when bins are available on loading platforms," said Clark. "The addition of the complimentary lockers near the end of the queue allows guests to place small items in then prior to getting to the platform. The time utilized for placing items in bins is eliminated by the lockers, so our ride hosts are able to perform their safety checks much faster, thus keeping the line moving."

Leaning into the ride's theme, Cedar Point has brought the Lake Erie presence into the attraction.

"The water elements surrounding the ride and within the queue tie in the theme of an old Lake Erie shipping yard," explained Clark. "While walking through the queue, you can tell something 'isn't right' within the waters below, which you will realize once you're on Siren's Curse."

Industry insiders are aware that the tilt coaster was originally ordered by a

park in Poland. When that arrangement fell through, it was acquired by a park in Mexico, where permitting snarled its installation there. Cedar Point had a suitable open site for it and was able to begin the process of adding Siren's Curse for the summer of 2025.

"The winter in Sandusky can be brutal!" Tonding Etges noted. "What the Cedar Point team did, together with contractors and Vekoma, was a major accomplishment in such a reduced period of time. Huge kudos to the Cedar Point team and everyone involved in the project."

An even bigger feather in its cap is Cedar Point's one-two punch for this season's guests. Top Thrill 2, built last year but delayed after its opening, reopened for the 2025 season in early May, offering guests two new, amazing, high-thrill experiences.



Once locked into place, the Siren's Curse train is released into a 90-degree, breathtaking plunge. COURTESY CEDAR POINT



# See You at Carowinds for the 2025 Golden Ticket Awards

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# Register today for 2025's Golden Ticket event; must sign up by August 25

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — It's almost time for *Amusement Today's* 28th annual Golden Ticket Awards hosted by **Carowinds**. Registration has opened for the event, which is free to attend for amusement industry professionals.

"It is such an honor to host the Golden Ticket Awards. We couldn't be more excited to welcome the finest from our industry to the Carolina state line for a celebration of our shared passions and commitments," said **Brian Oerding**, park manager, Carowinds.

"There are so many takeaways each year. *Amusement Today* is always pleased to hear from attendees how much they enjoyed being a part of it," said AT Publisher **Gary Slade**.

The event kicks off Friday evening with a private reception in the park's beautiful Aeronautica Landing. However, many industry friends enjoy an "only slightly" competitive annual golf tournament. For a third year, this charity event will raise funds for the **National Roller Coaster Museum and Archives**.

"The Golden Ticket golf tournament has a way of turning friendly competition into full-blown drama," joked Melissa Bamford, organizer. "It's the perfect mix of laughs, rivalry and genuinely great people."

That golf outing will take place at **The Divide Golf Club** in Matthew on September 5, starting at 8 a.m.

The Golden Ticket Awards weekend is much more than just the awards ceremony. For two days, industry professionals have opportunities to share best practices, enjoy behind-the-scenes looks at operations and enjoy award-winning rides. Food, drinks and celebration make for an unforgettable weekend.

Multiple behind-the-scenes tours have recently been announced including: a Culinary Tour, a showcase of Charlie Brown's River Raft Blast (**Mack Rides** River Battle) and Snoopy's Racing Railway (**ART Engineering**), a SCarowinds, tour, a construction site visit for 2026's new **WhiteWater West** attraction, a waterpark tour as well as a Park Security and K9 Dogs showcase lead by representatives of **3DK9**.

Supremely convenient for 2025 is that the host lodging accommodations are right on property. **Springhill Suites by Marriott Charlotte** is located steps from the front gate (discounted booking deadline is August 18, 2025). In addition, the nearby TownePlace Suites fort Mill at Carowinds Blvd is offering discounted rooms for Golden Ticket attendees (booking deadline is August 21, 2025).

"My favorite part is the networking opportunities," said Golden Ticket Awards Communications Coordinator **Tim Baldwin**. "Everyone has a chance to congratulate colleagues on their winning accomplishments, but to find those relaxing moments to really share with one another is priceless. People come away with such stories and heartfelt learning moments."

Attendees are encouraged to not delay, as registration will remain open through August 25. Attendance is limited to those who work within the amusement industry. There is no cost to attend, but registration is required.

•[goldenticketawards.com](http://goldenticketawards.com)



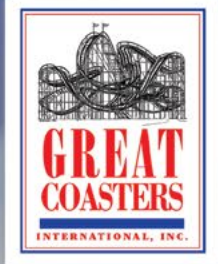
The 4th Annual NRCMA Golf Outing will be the unofficial start to the 2025 Golden Ticket Awards. The Friday morning event is only slightly competitive. AT/RON GUSTAFSON

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# PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

► Quassy Amusement Park adds two new rides — page 14 / Malibu Jack's opens huge Texas location — page 20

## Fantasiana adds Mack Rides's Big Dipper coaster dubbed Helios

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

STRASSWALCHEN, Austria — When **Mack Rides** introduced its Big Dipper genre in 2016, it was favorably received. Even though popular, the next installation didn't happen until 2019. **Europa-Park's** Voltron Nevera introduced the bigger, longer Stryker cousin last year, but it seems the Big Dipper model has now found its foothold as three were ordered for 2025.

The first to open was at **Fantasiana**. For a park of its size, it was a bold project. Boasting a custom layout, the new roller coaster is called Helios. To make space, the park retired a Pax coaster called Wild Train that operated for 20 seasons.

"Our primary goal was to introduce a thrilling new experience to the park, as the Wild Train coaster that previously stood in its place also offered a high level of excitement. This immediately narrowed down our options," said **Simon Spitzbart**, managing director. "We then needed a coaster with a compact layout that would fit perfectly into the existing area. Ultimately, the Big Dipper with 'Stryker' trains from Mack Rides proved to be the ideal choice, not least because Mack Rides presented us with an excellent overall package that perfectly met our vision. And the Stryker train is

state-of-the-art!"

"A Big Dipper is well-suited for compact layouts like Helios because it's a single car rather than a full train," said **Kathrin Haefele**, marketing, Mack Rides. "This means it can handle tighter turns and more abrupt transitions without the need for wide curves or long straight sections to accommodate multiple connected vehicles. The shorter length allows for more dynamic elements to be packed into a smaller footprint, which helps make the ride feel more intense and engaging despite the limited space. In short, the Big Dipper's design allows it to take full advantage of tight layouts without sacrificing pacing or excitement."

Riders are arranged in two rows of four, eight per vehicle.

The area around the coaster boasts an impressively themed atmosphere.

"Helios is deeply rooted in Greek mythology and Mediterranean themes," Spitzbart told *Amusement Today*. "Our aim was to bring a touch of the Mediterranean region into our amusement park. A standout feature is the magnificent Helios statue, which speaks every five minutes, further immersing guests in the theme. The intricate theming was brought to life by our dedicated in-house park crew, in collaboration



Helios soars over the Greek-inspired area (above). Riders scream through three inversion elements (right). COURTESY FANTASIANA, MATTHEW WITTWER

with the specialized firm **Universal Rocks**."

After reaching a height of over 75 feet, riders enter a dramatically twisted initial drop. This is followed by an outward-banked airtime hill. Throughout the tangled course, thrill seekers soar through three inversions. One of the "wow" moments is a speedy rush through a building, flipping upside down.

"The fly-through-the-building element is truly a fantastic feature," said Spitzbart. "It offers guests in the queue a thrilling preview of what awaits them

► See HELIOS, page 11



Fabbri Group Telecombat

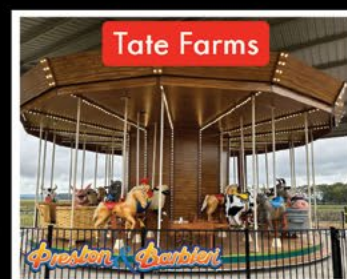


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## Merlin unveils new space-themed experiences, reaffirms investment

LONDON, U.K. — **Merlin Entertainments** unveiled the first details of the space-themed experiences being developed at its **Legoland Resorts** in Florida and California, including groundbreaking indoor roller coasters. This marks the next milestone in the nearly-\$94-million investment already announced for the two resorts.

The news, which closely follows the official opening of the 11th Legoland Resort in Shanghai in early July, demonstrated Merlin's continued commitment to bringing the Lego brand to life, at scale, through innovative new formats across its estate. It also reflects the business' broader strategy of working with the owners of leading, global brands to bring them to life through memorable experiences and investing to premiumize its existing estate, with a focus on priority attractions with the greatest potential for growth.

Families will be invited to travel together into the Lego galaxy packed with adventure, including immersive indoor rollercoasters in both Florida and California. These are set to be the most technologically advanced attractions the resorts have ever created, brought to life by Merlin Magic Making's global team of designers and engineers, in close collaboration with the **Lego Group**.

"After months of anticipation, we're



Space-themed, indoor roller coasters — debuting in 2026 at Legoland California and Legoland Florida — are part of a \$94-million investment by Merlin Entertainments at its North American Parks. COURTESY MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS

delighted to confirm details of these immersive, space-themed themed experiences at two of Merlin's premier resorts globally," said **Fiona Eastwood**, chief executive officer of Merlin Entertainments. "This [investment] exemplifies our strategy to premiumise our existing portfolio, offering young families even more high-quality attractions, with the captivating storytelling and learning through play that Legoland Resorts are renowned for.

"Our Merlin Magic Making creative team

are constantly working on new, compelling and interactive experiences across our Legoland Resorts as we further strengthen our partnership with the Lego Group and broaden our appeal to Lego's global fan base. In both locations, the boundless creativity of Lego will meet the wonders of space — setting a new standard for fun and imagination, and once again providing guests with a new reason to visit these destination resorts."

•merlinentertainments.biz

### ►HELIOS

Continued from page 10

on the coaster, significantly building anticipation. It's a segment that genuinely enhances the overall ride experience and adds a unique dynamic."

"The park had a few specific requests during the design of Helios," Haeefele told AT. "First, although the ride currently operates with just one train, it was important that the layout and station design allowed for the option to add a second train in the future. This gives the park flexibility to increase capacity if needed. Another key request was to deliver a rich ride experience within a very limited footprint. The goal was to include as many ride elements and dynamic moments as possible without requiring a large area — making the most of the available space while keeping the ride exciting from start to finish."

The theming and wild elements aren't the only thing that raises the bar on the attraction.



The outer seats on the coaster car stretch beyond the track (above left). Fantasia beautifully incorporated the themed area into the ride's layout (above right). COURTESY MATTHEW WITTWER

"Helios features onboard sound. The music is epic and grand, perfectly fitting the theme of the Greek sun god," said Spitzbart. "It's well-audible and meticulously synchronized with the ride's movements, truly elevating the entire experience."

The track length is 1,542 feet, and after a fast lift, it's all action. The top speed is 46 mph.

"Helios isn't long in

terms of track length, but it still delivers a complete and satisfying ride experience. From the moment it leaves the station, the pacing is tight —there's barely a moment to catch your breath," said Haeefele. "The layout includes a variety of elements packed closely together, like sharp turns, airtime hills and quick transitions, which keep riders fully engaged the entire time. Because there's no



slow or empty section, the ride feels full and well-balanced. It doesn't rely on length to create impact; instead, it uses great integration of the well-done theming — queue, station, water fountain — around the ride, together with the storytelling of Helios, enhances the ride experience."

The new attraction has had a favorable impact on Fantasia's season.

"The guest reaction has

been overwhelmingly positive!" beamed Spitzbart. "We've seen a noticeable increase in attendance since Helios opened. The inverted element, especially the one directly over the entrance area, has been particularly well-received, exciting newly arriving park guests and setting a vibrant tone for their visit."

The park's operating calendar continues through November 1.



# Walibi Belgium debuts Gerstlauer Airtime Coaster — Mecalodon

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

WAVRE, Belgium — On July 26, 1975, **Walibi Belgium** opened its gates and, according to the park, was the first in Europe to offer a single pay-one-price ticket for all the attractions. This year, Walibi is celebrating its 50th anniversary — and they have made the occasion extra special.

A reimagined area in the heart of Port World is the new Dock World. The anchor attraction here is Mecalodon, the park's 10th coaster, and the first Airtime Coaster from Gerstlauer. It has the marketing clout of being the largest family coaster in the Benelux.

"It is certainly nice to have our very first Airtime Coaster, Mecalodon, right next to Tiki Waka, one of our exceptionally popular Bobsled Coasters. It serves as a compelling showcase, even if it only scratches the surface of what the Bobsled Coaster model is capable of," said **Jan-Phillipp Roelle**, project manager, Gerstlauer. "**Compagnie des Alpes** places great emphasis on delivering distinctive experiences across their parks, with particularly high expectations for theming and standards. We are proud to have been a trusted partner with them on so many successful projects over the years."

This is the third project on which Gerstlauer has partnered with Walibi Belgium.

"Walibi was specifically looking for a 'next generation' family roller coaster," Roelle said. "Something that the whole family could enjoy — but with an extra kick, low to the ground with multiple launches and airtime. From the reactions so far, we believe



Mecalodon (above) is the first Airtime Coaster project from Gerstlauer. The roller coaster zooms over water and the nautical theming of Dock World (below left). Low-to-the-ground maneuvers (below right) accent a sense of speed and excitement. COURTESY WALIBI BELGIUM



our team absolutely nailed it." "Visitors have been thrilled!" exclaimed **Adèle Moreau**, communication manager, Walibi Belgium. "They're especially impressed by the attention to detail in the newly themed area. The reimagined attractions, the immersive setting, and of course Mecalodon itself have all been really well received. The ride is a hit with both kids and adults — it strikes a perfect balance of thrills and fun."

Adding to the entertaining aspect, the fronts of the train sport a shark motif.

"There are numerous characteristics that make Mecalodon a standout attraction, like its scenic location over the lake, the extensive

and dynamic layout and the uniquely themed trains. Everything contributes to its distinct character," Roelle told *Amusement Today*. "What truly elevates Mecalodon is its ability to deliver genuine airtime moments to a much wider audience. Nearly all family members and friends can enjoy the feeling of weightlessness together. It's not called an 'Airtime Coaster' for nothing; Mecalodon is the first ride of its kind to offer 14 airtime moments, even for guests as little as one meter in height. This represents an all-new benchmark in the family thrill coaster segment."

"Water has always been part of Walibi's DNA — we even started with a water ski lift back in the day," Moreau commented. "So, building on the lake was a natural decision. Mecalodon doesn't go very high, so the sensation relies on speed, tight turns and near-miss dives toward the lake surface. It gives a floating, gliding sensation — and while it looks intense, you never get wet on the ride."

"From a technical standpoint, building over water presents no significant challenges for us as a manufac-

turer," stated Roelle. "The only requirement is that the water must be temporarily drained during the installation process. Beyond that, our engineering and construction methods can handle just about any environment."

"Significant development work went into designing the seat and restraint system, which is how we achieved its low height requirement without sacrificing safety. Our development and design department did an exceptional job to hit those targets," Roelle added.

In order to introduce the new attraction, the park removed a slow boat tow ride.

"Walibi is located in a residential area, and we've used nearly all of the land available to us," Moreau told AT. "That means we sometimes have to make tough choices to keep evolving. In this case, we said goodbye to Gold River Adventure, a boat ride, in order to create space for Mecalodon. The tradeoff made sense: Mecalodon offers significantly better capacity and matches the current demand for high-energy family attractions."

This large-scale project, representing an invest-

ment of €35 (\$41.3) million, required 15 months of construction. This expansion continues a transformation of the park that has occurred over the past several years.

"Back in 2017, Walibi launched a major investment plan to transform the park into a true theme park, creating what we call the Worlds of Walibi — immersive themed zones that fully transport our guests," said Moreau. "It began with Exotic World and the Tiki-Waka coaster in 2018, followed by Karma World and Fun World in 2019, with attractions like Popcorn Revenge and Fun Pilot. Then came Exotic World 2.0 in 2021 with Kondaa. Despite setbacks from COVID and the 2021 floods, we continued the transformation — adding new slides to Aqualibi in 2023, and now the full transformation of Dock World."

Returning guests will find new additions to that area of the park, making that section completely fresh. Dock World features new food outlets: Hungry Sharky, the West Lighthouse and

Pêche & Mignon, as well as Dock Shop.

"This area needed a complete rework; the attractions there lacked cohesion, and guests often passed them by," noted Moreau. "By introducing Mecalodon, retheming four existing rides, and adding new restaurants and a retail store, we've revitalized this entire section and bettered the park's overall capacity. The two kids' attractions have almost doubled their total visitors compared to previous seasons."

To make the area feel more cohesive, several of the park's attractions have been completely redesigned to fit into this maritime theme. Psyké Underground (a **Schwarzkopf**/Gerstlauer shuttle coaster) returns to its previous name, Turbine, while Flash Back (**Mack** flume) now blends into the industrial setting of the port. The youngest are not forgotten, with Stormy and Tous en boîte, two attractions rethemed to the nautical atmosphere.

Judging by guest reactions, Walibi Belgium has made the right decisions to celebrate 50 years.



Attractions nearby have been rethemed, and new establishments such as Hungry Sharky make the area cohesive. COURTESY WALIBI BELGIUM





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# Quassy Amusement Park adds two new rides, train engine in 2025

AT: Ron Gustafson  
Special to Amusement Today

MIDDLEBURY, Conn. — It's been a season of new additions at **Quassy Amusement and Waterpark**.

The lakeside property in its 117th year recently took delivery of a new figure-eight spinning coaster from **SBF/Visa Group** of Italy. In addition, the family-owned park acquired a C.P. Huntington train engine (**Chance Rides**) from the **Columbus Zoo and Aquarium**, Columbus, Ohio. Both purchases were brokered by **Rides 4 U**, Somerville, New Jersey.

Another big addition was installed at Quassy just before opening for the 2025 season: a new wave swinger from **Wooddesign Amusement Rides BV**, the Netherlands.

Themed as Aladdin, the swing ride has a capacity of 42 persons and replaced a Yo-Yo swing ride (**Chance Rides**), which operated at the park since 2004.

"We enhanced the guest experience even more with two new rides and the additional engine for our train," said Park President **Eric Anderson**. "We had a contest to name the new coaster — a ride we have had our eye on for a few years —



The C.P. Huntington train engine was in the Quassy maintenance facility prior to a major refurbishment at the family-owned park (above left). Quassy Maintenance Supervisor Rui DaSilva restored the C.P. Huntington train engine (above right) after it was acquired from the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium. COURTESY QUASSY; AT/ RON GUSTAFSON



and the winning entry was Crazy 8. It was delivered in late June and put into service before July 4, 2025.

The wave swinger was the ideal replacement for our Yo-Yo, which served the park very well for 20 years," Anderson added. "It's already a hit with our guests and has single and double seats. Its height requirement allows some younger children to ride with an accompanying adult in the double seats."

With the addition of the 16-seat spinning coaster, Quassy now has seven rides from the SBF/Visa portfolio. In 2010, the park

made its first investment with the Italian manufacturer by purchasing a drop tower themed as Free Fall 'N'. In 2015, a Dance Party 360, heavily decked out as FRANTIC, made its debut at the south end of the park. SBF/Visa kiddie bumper cars were also installed in an adjacent building, which proved to be a wise decision by the park's owners.

"Like many others in our industry, we always had complaints about younger children not being able to ride our full-sized bumper cars," the park official pointed out. "Adding the kiddie

bumper cars resolved the issue immediately, and they generally run at capacity."

In 2016, the park seized the opportunity to showcase the first Reverse Time thrill ride in all of North America. The 24-seat oscillating SBF/Visa attraction replaced a Chance Trabant, which had been at the park since 1965. The distinguishing difference between the rides is that the seats on Reverse Time face outward, for a new and unique ride experience.

The park updated its lakeside kiddieland in 2017, adding yet another SBF/Visa product — this time a mini

pirate jet ride that Quassy named Skipper's Clippers. For the 2020 season, a new Pirate 32 from the supplier replaced a Galleon swinging ship (**Zamperla**), which had operated at Quassy since 2008.

"The train engine we purchased from the Columbus Zoo has been completely refurbished in our maintenance shop," Anderson said of the acquisition. "**Rui DaSilva**, who has been with us for more than 25 years, did another incredible job with that project. We now have two engines for our train ride and can swap them out if there is a mechanical issue. It's such a popular ride, we didn't want to pass up the opportunity to have a good engine in reserve."

In addition, 300 feet of pre-engineered track from **The Gravity Group**, Cincinnati, Ohio, was installed before the season on **Wooden Warrior**, the 2011 marquee coaster at Quassy. It marked the first significant track work done on the award-winning ride, which was designed by the Cincinnati company.

•quassy.com



The Crazy 8 spinning coaster from SBF/Visa Group is a new family ride at Quassy (above left). The park also added a Wooddesign Amusement Rides BV Wave Swinger dubbed "Aladdin" (above right) AT/ RON GUSTAFSON



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Wallace & Gromit's Thrill-O-Matic ride at Pleasure Beach Resort will soon feature updates from the duo's latest cinematic adventure, *Vengeance Most Fowl*.  
COURTESY PLEASURE BEACH RESORT

## Pleasure Beach Resort reveals Wallace & Gromit additions

BLACKPOOL, U.K. — Blackpool's **Pleasure Beach Resort** is introducing five new additions to its Wallace & Gromit's Thrill-O-Matic attraction to coincide with the release of *Vengeance Most Fowl*, the duo's most recent film currently available on **Netflix**.

The additions will include fan-favourite characters from the BAFTA-winning film, including Norbot and new interpretations of Feathers McGraw, alongside the dynamic duo.

In *Vengeance Most Fowl*, Gromit must save his master by battling the evil Feathers McGraw, who has hacked Wallace's latest invention; a robotic garden gnome named Norbot.

Pleasure Beach also confirmed there will be additional updates to the ride's queue and has already introduced exclusive new merchandise, including Norbot toys and gifts, at its dedicated Wallace & Gromit shop.

"Pleasure Beach is renowned not only for introducing exciting new rides, but for constantly investing in updating the story, systems, technology and theming of our classic attractions," stated **Amanda Thompson** OBE, CEO of Pleasure Beach Resort.

The four-minute Thrill-O-Matic ride sees guests climb aboard a giant slipper and be transported into the colorful world of Wallace & Gromit, travelling through scenes from *A Grand Day Out*, *The Wrong Trousers*, *A Close Shave*, *A Matter of Loaf and Death* and *The Curse of the Were Rabbit*.

The new additions from *Vengeance Most Fowl* will debut this summer, and will include the same minute detail and effects that bring Wallace's cracking contraptions to life in the existing ride.

Creators **Aardman** are working closely with Pleasure Beach's engineering and creative teams, and the new characters, props and set pieces being designed and created in-house at Pleasure Beach by **PB Studios**.

"Wallace & Gromit are national treasures and have always been a firm favourite with visitors, but the success of their new film has certainly delivered a renewed excitement for the characters and their stories," added Thompson. "To be updating this wonderful ride truly reaffirms our commitment to attracting families back to the resort for what we hope will be *A Grand Day Out*."

The additions to Wallace & Gromit's Thrill-O-Matic are hot on the heels of the newly re-opened Launch Pad ride at Pleasure Beach, which reopened in May after an extensive re-imagining. The park has also announced a brand new ride, *Aviktas*, will open in 2026. *Aviktas* is a giant swinging pendulum ride that will reach heights of 138 feet, making it the tallest of its kind in the U.K.



Fresh off its debut on the hit TV show, *Shark Tank*, **Dig World**, a construction-themed adventure park in Texas, is teaming up with **Simon Property Group** to open its second location at Simon's **Grapevine Mills** in Grapevine, Texas.

Partnering with family-friendly entertainment powerhouse **Dude Perfect**, the park will feature construction-inspired trick-shot attractions that complement its existing signature construction-themed experiences, with plans to expand nationwide following their Grapevine Mills debut.

Dig World's first location will be in **Katy Mills**, Katy, Texas.

A vibrant new adventure realm designed to entertain, educate, and inspire families is now open at **Busch Gardens Tampa Bay**, Tampa, Florida.

Park officials held a ribbon-cutting ceremony last month for Wild Oasis. The rainforest-themed area invites guests to explore an immersive world filled with animal habitats, interactive play zones and thrilling attractions.

"We are thrilled to officially open Wild Oasis to all our guests," **Brian Bacica**, park president of Busch Gardens Tampa Bay, said in a press release. "This vibrant, rainforest-inspired realm is filled with incredible animal habitats, immersive attractions, and hands-on play areas designed to entertain, educate and inspire. It's an unforgettable adventure for the whole family."

Along with rides, slides and pools at **Elitch Gardens**, Denver, Colorado, park officials there added a full lineup of events this year. From character meet-and-greets and interactive performances to Dive-In Movies and dazzling fireworks displays.

There have been Smurfs, Peppa Pig and Enhanced Blippi meet-and-greets. Dive-In Movies featured films such as *Tangled* and *Despicable Me 4*.

A July 4 fireworks display dazzled guests as it lit up the Denver skyline.

August brings *Toy Story* and *Lilo and Stitch* Dive-In Movies. Meet-and-greets include PJ Masks with Catboy, Owlette and Gekko and Octonauts and mini performances with Captain Barnacles and Kwazii.

It looks like the Wyler Aerial Tramway,

a beloved El Paso, Texas, attraction, is on track to reopen after being closed since 2018 owing to safety concerns, according to a story that ran on local **KFox14 News**.

The story stated that the **Camino Real Regional Mobility Authority** is overseeing the tramway's restoration, which has been outlined as a three-phase project.

The article stated that Phase One includes demolition work, rock removal and other prep work. It is about 40 percent complete. Phase Two is the public-facing component and Phase Three is the completion of the tram.

Phase One is expected to be completed in September 2026, with total completion anticipated a few years later, the article stated.

A Portland, Oregon, hearings officer has denied an appeal to block **Oaks Amusement Park** from adding a 135-foot drop tower ride, despite concerns from nearby residents that it would mar scenic views and potentially harm wildlife in the adjacent **Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge**.

The new ride will be located near the center of the 44-acre park in Southeast Portland, tucked among trees along the Willamette River at the north end of **Sellwood Riverfront Park**.

The **Tennessee Aquarium** in Chattanooga, Tennessee, has welcomed Kintana, a two-year-old female red-collared brown lemur, to its Lemur Forest exhibit, joining the lone male, John.

Kintana arrived from the **Dallas Zoo**, Dallas, Texas, and has quickly bonded with John, filling the void left by the loss of his previous companion, Jessie. The aquarium has also relocated its Giant Pacific Octopus to a new habitat in the Island Life gallery, offering visitors better views of the animal.

**Ripley's Believe It or Not! Williamsburg**, Virginia, celebrated its completed refurbishment with a ribbon cutting on July 11.

According to a local online news outlet, **Wydaily**, **Brandon Ely**, the new general manager of Ripley's Believe It Or Not! Williamsburg, said they've added more than 80 new exhibits to the museum and revamped the mini golf course behind the building.

**Holiday World and Splashin' Safari**, Santa Claus, Indiana, will debut a new culinary event, Summer Wine'd Down, on August 4, 2025. Running through September 13, the family-friendly festival will offer guests the chance to explore 30 original menu items available exclusively during the event.

Some of those menu items will include Honey Sesame Shrimp, Chicken and Waffle Biscuit with hot honey, Brisket Biscuit and Star-Spangled Beignets. Each specialty menu item will have a suggested wine pairing available at separate locations throughout the park.



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# Chuck E. Cheese launches new Chuck's Arcade brand extension



Chuck's Arcade locations are now open in major malls across the country. COURTESY CHUCK E. CHEESE

DALLAS — Chuck E. Cheese is stepping into a new era with the launch of **Chuck's Arcade**. This new arcade concept from the company combines classic games and the hottest new games alongside iconic animatronic characters.

The arcade was created for adults and lifelong fans who grew up surrounded by the electric glow of arcade screens, the symphony of digital

soundtracks and the thrill of chasing high scores with friends long into the night. Chuck's Arcade is a modern-day love letter to the games and people who made Chuck E. Cheese great.

"Chuck E. Cheese has spent decades mastering the arcade experience — it's in our DNA," said **David McKillips**, CEO of Chuck E. Cheese. "Thanks to the expertise of our talented

technicians and the successful transformation of almost 500 fun centers worldwide, we've built the operational and creative foundation to take our brand beyond our traditional four walls. Chuck's Arcade is a natural evolution — an opportunity to extend our arcade legacy into new formats that engage both lifelong fans and a new generation through a curated mix of retro classics and cutting-edge experiences."

Chuck's Arcade locations are now open in major malls across the country, including St. Petersburg, Florida; Trumbull, Connecticut; Oklahoma City and Tulsa, Oklahoma; Victor, New York; Buford, Georgia; El Paso, Texas; Nashua and Salem, New Hampshire and St. Louis, Missouri — with more locations on the horizon.

For nearly five decades, Chuck E. Cheese has been a go-to place for the newest arcade games. Chuck's Arcade carries that tradition forward, bringing today's gamers the hottest titles — from state-of-the-art racing simulators and immersive virtual reality to new hits like Jurassic Park, Halo and Connect Four Hoops.

While the focus is on cutting-edge play, Chuck's Arcade also features a curated collection of retro legends — think Ms. Pac-Man, Galaga, Mortal Kombat, Donkey Kong and Centipede — offering a nod to the games that shaped generations. It's a fresh, modern arcade experience, providing what's next in arcade entertainment with just enough nostalgia for anyone looking to relive a classic high-score chase.

Adding to the experience, each arcade is overseen by an animatronic character such as Chuck E. Cheese or one of the other characters from Munch's Make Believe Band — historic figures from the brand's past, now standing watch as a nostalgic nod rather than performing. Select locations also feature exclusive retro-themed merchandise: classic logo apparel, collectible toys, novelty candy and prize redemption items, all celebrating the magic of winning that fans have always loved.

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# New Malibu Jack's in North Richmond Hills exceeds expectations

AT: Pam Sherborne  
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

NORTH RICHMOND HILLS, Texas — The new **Malibu Jack's** entertainment center, which opened June 16 in North Richmond Hills (NRH), Texas, is hitting all its marks as far as expectations and even exceeding them.

This 137,000-square-foot indoor family entertainment center features everything from 30,000 square feet of indoor go-kart racing, bowling and games to rides.

"The launch of Malibu Jack's in North Richland Hills has exceeded expectations from day one," said **Wes Marks**, COO, **Five Star Parks and Attractions**, owner, Malibu Jack's. "We're seeing incredible excitement from the community, and early guest feedback reinforces what we've always believed: this is more than just an entertainment center, it's a destination."

Rides at the facility include the **Twist 'n Shout** spinning coaster and **Whirlpool** by **SBF/Visa Group**. In addition, the FEC features an **Altitude Attractions** Hammered ride dubbed "Jumpin' Jack's Drop."

**Len Soled**, **Rides 4 U**, brokered the ride deal between Five Star and SBF/Visa. He was pleased to be able to get this deal together for the facility.

"I haven't been over there yet, but I plan to go," Soled said. "They have told me they are getting a phenomenal response from the rides, especially the zero gravity Whirlpool. They told me that it is the



The North Richmond Hills Malibu Jack's is a 137,000-square-foot FEC that opened June 16, debuted as the largest indoor entertainment center in the state. The SBF/Visa Group Zero Gravity ride dubbed "Whirlpool" (above) and Altitude Attractions Hammered attraction dubbed "Jumpin' Jack's Drop" (right) are two of four rides at the new FEC. AT/SAMMY PICCOLA

one thing that runs from the time they open to the time they close at night. It has no downtime."

Aside from those three rides, there is also a dark ride where players may choose from a selection of 3D movies and compete with others for the highest score in an action-packed adventure. It was manufactured by **Alterface**, in collaboration with **Triotech** for media integration.

No center would be complete without an arcade and this one at NRH's Malibu Jack's is packed with over 130 games. **Betson Enterprises** was on board as a supplier.

There are also two miniature golf courses, the **Under the Sea** glow-in-the-dark miniature golf and **Bogey Beach Tropical Golf**. Both are nine-hole courses and supplied by **Adventure Golf and Sports**, with **ArtAttack** responsible for the theming.

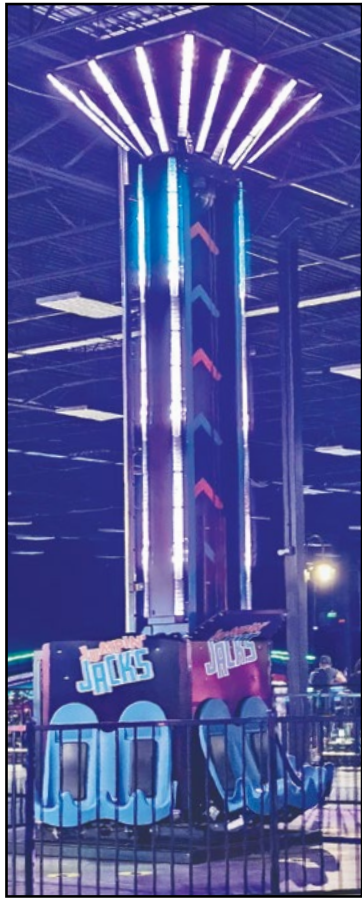
**Under the Sea Glow Golf** features a blacklight ocean, and **Bogey Beach** features an 11-foot-high waterfall, waterscapes, palm trees and tropical flowers.

There is a laser tag area themed to a Texas western town and is being touted as highly immersive. The laser tag course was supplied by **Laserforce**.

There are 12 Duckpin Bowling lanes by **Brunswick Bowling**.

And for the young adventurers, **Bounce Beach** is taking excitement to new heights, literally. The massive play area is so big that it has a three-story pirate ship. It is geared for those 12 years of age and younger.

And if that is not enough, Malibu Jack's offers the **Hang Ten Pepsi Patio** where there is a self-pour beverage wall stocked with beer, wine, margaritas, cocktails and more for guests to enjoy while playing giant beer



pong-style games, Jenga and cornhole.

And, of course, Malibu Jack's has the ability to host birthday parties, corporate events, field trips, school groups and holiday parties. Party planners have options whether they want to have a bowling party, a Bounce Beach party, full access and more. There are four event spaces within the center.

"Our goal with every new location is to create experiences that are immersive, inclusive and unforgettable," Marks said. "We expect this park to become a cornerstone for family fun in the DFW area, and we're already planning ways to elevate the guest experience even further. It's rewarding to see our team's hard work come to life and to know we're building something that families will

## FAST FACTS

### Rides:

- Twist 'n Shout Coaster (SBF/Visa Group)
- 
- Jumpin' Jack's Drop (Altitude Attractions)
- 
- Whirlpool (SBF/Visa Group)
- 
- Dark Ride (Alterfac in collaboration with Triotech)

### Other features:

- Arcade (Betson Enterprises)
- 
- Go-Karts (Shaller Karts)
- 
- Miniature Golf (AGS with theming by ArtAttack)
- 
- Laser Tag (Laserforce, with theming by ArtAttack)
- 
- Bowling (Brunswick Bowling)



The Texas Malibu Jack's location features **Twist 'n Shout**, a spinning coaster from SBF/Visa (above left). The 30,000 square feet of indoor go-kart racing — featuring carts supplied by **Shaller Kart** — are popular at the new location (above right). AT/SAMMY PICCOLA

come back to, again and again."

Five Star decided to open a Malibu Jack's location in NRH because of its vibrancy and growth, due to being a mid-to-high end suburb in the Mid-Cities region of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. The company felt it was an ideal location for families looking for year-round entertainment in a climate-controlled center.

"We saw a strong demand for family-friendly indoor attractions in this region, and Malibu Jack's offered the perfect opportunity to fill that gap with an unforgettable experience," Marks said.

With the addition of the NRH center, Five Star now has seven Malibu Jack's locations. The other locations are Ashland, Kentucky; Lexington, Kentucky; Springfield, Illinois; Lafayette, Indiana and Quad Cities, Iowa.

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# Sky Pirates of Mermaid Bay elevates Pigeon Forge mini-golf, literally

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

PIGEON FORGE, Tenn. — There's no denying that Pigeon Forge is a vacation destination. A world-renowned theme park, a water park, show venues and all sorts of recreation beckon families as they enter town. The "Parkway" is non-stop eye candy for kids looking out the car windows.

One of the newest on the scene continues to make a name for itself. **Sky Pirates of Mermaid Bay** has elevated mini golf — both figuratively and vertically. Miniature golf is always a fun time with family, but visitors to this newest incarnation find it a little extra special.

"One thing we've done with Sky Pirates and [our other brands] is we try to make the outside façade very appealing and eye-catching to guests," said **Marcus Watson**, vice president of marketing, **Top Concepts**. "As you pull up, the building itself has the big logo, and you can visibly see the rooftop course and huge pirate ship and blimp on top of the ship. That's the first thing you see, and that gets a lot of people starting to ask questions as to 'What exactly is that?'"

Top Concepts is a management company that oversees various brands and is no stranger to Pigeon Forge. Under its umbrella is **Toy Box Mini Golf**, **Top Jump Trampoline & Extreme Arena**, **Crave Golf Club**, **Paula Dean's Lumberjack Feud Supper Show** and more.

According to Watson, the concept of Sky Pirates was in



Two golf courses are offered, an indoor course and one on the rooftop (above) with the thematic props. Actors and an immersive environment make the mini golf extra fun (below left). Fog, lighting, sound and large sculpture pieces bring an underwater feel to the indoor course (below middle and right). COURTESY TOP CONCEPTS



the works for years, slightly interrupted by COVID. The location did not have an attraction-based business before Sky Pirates was built.

"Anything you can find on the Parkway is prime real estate," Watson said.

Upon entering Sky Pirates of Mermaid Bay, visitors see Candy Cave on the right, along with retail. A huge Kraken in the middle of the lobby has tentacles that run up to the roof and wrap around the ship.

If that didn't offer enough "oooh" for kids, actors portraying pirates and mermaids are sure to capture their attention. Photo ops seem almost automatic. There is also free face painting.

But it's all about the golf.

Two courses make the facility practically weatherproof. An indoor course puts families under the sea. Immersive theming makes each hole an underwater storyline.

"We have fog throughout the entire course to give the feeling of being under water," Watson told

*Amusement Today*. "As you go through the course, we have audio and props and things of that nature that create that overall narrative."

Sky Pirates of Mermaid Bay boasts an outdoor course, too — on the roof. The sky pirates course comes with a story: "Thunderbeard, a fierce and innovative captain, commands a notorious band of sky pirates aboard the world's first and only flying ship, the Smoky Doubloon. With cannons that crackle like thunderstorms, they soar through the skies in search of legendary treasures they can plunder. Their latest target is the mythical Mermaid Bay. For generations, these mystical beings have safeguarded a hidden treasure coveted by many. The clash between Thunderbeard's audacious ambition and the mermaids' steadfast guardianship promises to reshape the destinies of both sky pirates and sea-dwellers alike."

When all levels are combined, there are approximately

55,000 square feet, with 32,000 square feet of usable space.

**UCreative** of Ohio was the partner who co-designed the facility. **Brainchild** is a local company that Top Concepts worked with to build all the large props. The courses were built by **Castle Golf**.

In addition to views of Pigeon Forge, the rooftop course offers unique challenges if families wish to make it interesting — or reduce Dad's unfair advantage: stand on one leg, putt between your legs, etc. Kids also enjoy climbing the ship on the roof and returning back down via a slide.

What truly elevates Sky Pirates of Mermaid Bay is the character interaction. During all shifts, visitors can engage with pirates and mermaids both in the main area as well as on the courses.

"What makes us really unique in relation to any other mini golf in the area is the amount of what we have to offer," Watson said. "Everything we've done — we've gone all out. The over-

all investment was between \$11 to 13 million. We've really 'gone in' in making it an immersive experience. We've taken the concept of mini golf to the next level."

The main source of revenue is golfing, but with retail and concessions, there are more opportunities for families to spend, even with the free activities of face painting, dress-up, photo ops and character interactions.

"The most popular concession is the **Dole Whip** served in a hollowed-out pineapple," Watson said.

The facility has garnered two awards from *USA Today*: Best New Attraction and Best Mini Golf. It was also up for an **IAAPA** Brass Ring for Best Location-Based Entertainment.

One round of golf sells for \$19.99 for adults and 16.99 for children 11 and under. For \$5 more, players can enjoy both courses. A discount of \$2 can be applied if tickets are purchased online.

Sky Pirates of Mermaid Bay is open year-round  
•[skypiratesgolf.com](http://skypiratesgolf.com)



Both mermaids and pirates engage with visitors.  
COURTESY TOP CONCEPTS





## FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

AT: John W.C. Robinson  
jrobinson@amusementtoday.com

**SmashSwing Immersive** has secured a deal with **Atari** to develop two new games based on their iconic properties, *Asteroids* and *Centipede*. These games will be included in SmashSwing's golf entertainment library and will be playable at their licensed venues.

"*Asteroids* and *Centipede* will bring a new level of excitement to our giant cinematic screen sizes with multi-player gaming technology," said **TJ Schier**, SmashSwing CEO. "These licensed IP brands are the first of many that will allow us to deliver a steady stream of games and tap into iconic, ardent fan bases to drive players into our venue. These collaborations will elevate the user experience and drive repeat visits to SmashSwing locations."

**Sacoa Cashless System** announced the successful installation of its technology at **Strikers Sports Bar and Bowling Center**, located inside **Barcelo Maya Grand Resort's Maya Mall**, in partnership with **Grupo Meriva**.

"We've been with Sacoa since 2020 and more than just a supplier, we consider it an unreplaceable business partner for future growth," said **Marco Manera**, co-founder and managing director at Grupo Meriva.

Strikers combines sports, food and fun in a single high-energy environment. With Sacoa's innovative tools, the venue can now offer guests quick recharge options, better gameplay insights and loyalty-friendly features that enhance overall engagement. This implementation streamlines operations while offering visitors a seamless, cash-free experience across bowling lanes, arcade games and family entertainment zones.

**Altitude Trampoline Park** has achieved its target with the grand opening of six parks in the first two quarters of 2025, marking a significant milestone in its aggressive growth strategy. With momentum strong, the brand is now directing its expansion to key new regions — Minnesota, Indiana, Nevada, Missouri and Colorado — with the goal of further amplifying its national footprint.

To help lead this next phase of franchise growth, Altitude recently welcomed **Jerek Pazgan-Lorenzo** as its new director of franchise development.

"Our goal isn't just to grow our number of locations — it's to elevate the experience at every park," said **Chris Kuehn**, president of **Indoor Active Brands**. "We're proud to have opened six parks already this year, and with new markets and a strong team in place — including Jerek's leadership — we're in a great position to continue that momentum through the rest of 2025 and beyond."

**Betson Enterprises** partnered with **Elston Electric** on a large-scale game room installation as part of Chicago's newest arcade destination inside the **Salt Shed** complex. Betson supplied and installed 45 of the 110 games that make up Elston Electric's expansive 11,000-square-foot arcade space.

"Betson is family-owned and you can feel it — good folks in every department, top to bottom," said **Zespy**, owner and operator of Elston Electric. "The service felt personal, and they took the time to visit our space and really get to know the vibe we were building. That made all the difference."

Betson Enterprises worked closely with the Elston Electric team to curate a unique, high-energy game floor. The layout includes a mix of video games, pinball machines, Skee-Ball, air hockey and a variety of VR experiences. Elston's Redemption Shop adds a creative flair with a wide range of prizes — from traditional arcade rewards to one-of-a-kind collectibles.

**Intercard's** latest cashless technology plays a crucial role at **Playdium**, the newest and biggest indoor FEC in Sri Lanka. The 16,000-square-foot center features **Brunswick** bowling, a 34-game arcade, VR attractions, bumper cars, soft play and a full service restaurant.

**Rohit Mathur** and **CSML**, Intercard's distributor in India, handled the arcade installation. The games are connected to a system of more than 40 card readers and self-service kiosks.



COURTESY HIPPIE FISH

## Hippie Fish entertainment center opens on Gulf Coast

GULFPORT, Miss. — Dynamic family entertainment center **Hippie Fish** opened on June 26, 2025, in Gulfport, Mississippi's historic **Centennial Plaza Resort**. Designed to entertain both locals and visitors, Hippie Fish boasts two 18-hole putting courses, arcades as well as a full-service restaurant. The new FEC provides an experience on the Mississippi Gulf Coast that feels easy and enjoyable.

"The golf courses are exceptionally designed," said **Tessy Lambert**, CMO of **Lodging & Leisure Investments, LLC**. "The restaurant serves high-quality cuisine and cocktails, and the setting makes people want to linger and enjoy the full experience. We are excited to introduce this concept to the already bustling Centennial Plaza Resort and invite fans into a lifestyle of better fun."

With two levels of entertainment, Hippie Fish is a great option for families any day of the week and an ideal spot for birthday parties or other celebratory events.

With two, over-the-top 18-hole courses intricately designed by leading recreational golf construction firm **Harris Mini Golf** — and set underneath live oak trees, — Hippie Fish's miniature golf experience is sure to delight. Each hole features unexpected twists, challenging shots and just enough luck to keep things interesting.

The FEC also offers 130 arcade and redemption games and more than 230 player positions, complete with games of skill and immersive virtual reality.

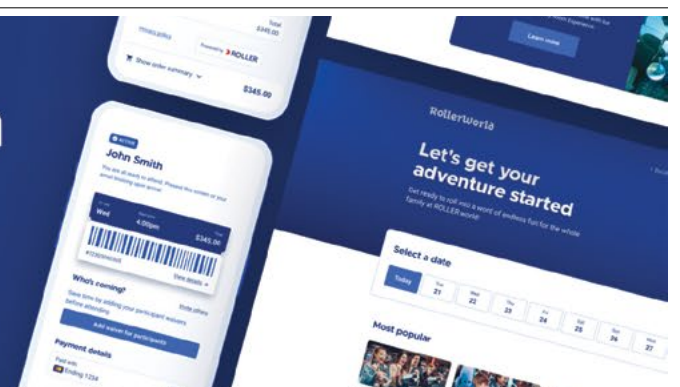
The Hippie Fish restaurant — led by Chef **Tremayne Davis** — has a vintage coastal feel with bold modern energy, making it the perfect spot to unwind, connect and share a few nibbles. Must-try items include the Gulf Coast Pile-Up, a Hippie Fish take on coastal nachos stacked high with sauteed shrimp, crawfish, jalapenos, pico de gallo, sour cream and guacamole.

"Beyond serving as the Gulf Coast's newest entertainment attraction, Hippie Fish has already created 60 new jobs across a variety of roles, including food and beverage service, golf course attendants, game technicians, party hosts and more," said Lambert. "We're proud to be adding meaningful opportunities to the local workforce while building something fun and lasting for the community."

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# Beautiful weather, but attendance down at San Diego County Fair

AT: B. Derek Shaw

bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

DEL MAR, Calif. — During the 20-day **San Diego County Fair**, 874,263 visited this year, which is 0.36% less than the 877,452 folks who made it to the 2024 edition, an average of 44,000 attendees per day. Even the beautiful weather and mild temperatures in the 70s weren't enough to add to the count.

Summer Pet-tacular was the theme this year — a celebration of pets and pet ownership. Pet-themed entertainment, programming, signage, food offerings and art could be found throughout the grounds. That entertainment included corgi and wiener-dog races; dock dogs and fly-ball competitions, stunt dog shows, puppy yoga sessions and an event with noted dog trainer **Cesar Millan**. The Fair also allowed dog owners to take their pooches for a Fun Run and Walk before the fair opened to the public on Saturday, July 5.

This fair is one of a handful in the United States that operates an independent midway. This year, 71 rides were brought in, with 31 being ones designed for the younger set.

Eleven new rides brought to this spot included



The San Diego County Fair featured 17 ride providers. Nighttime along the midway offered a dazzling display of lights and colors along with the sounds and smells from the food wafting in the air (above right). COURTESY STEFAN HINZ



Hip Hop — **KMG, Bishop Amusements**; Avenger — **Fun Light Amuesments - Helm and Sons**; Saddle Up — **ADM, Helm and Sons**; Spider — **Eyerly, Helm and Sons**; Balloon Wheel — **Zamperla, Helm and Sons**; Thunderbird — **Lamberink, Iconic Midway Rides**; Super Shot — **ARM, Kastl Amusements**; Farm Tractors — **Allan Herschell, M&C Attractions**; Enchanted Castle — **Owens Trailers, Ray Cammack Shows**; Titan — **Fabbri booster, Ray Cammack Shows** and Ghost Pirate - **Kid Power Systems, Still Tryan**.

The three most popular rides included Ferris

Wheel — **Lamberink, Talley Amusements**; Raptor Coaster — **SDC, Ray Cammack Shows** and Crazy Mouse — **Reverchon, Wood Entertainment**.

Here's the breakdown of rides from each of the 17 ride providers: **Alamo Amusements**, 6; **Bishop Amusements**, 7; **Caprice Enterprises**, 2; **Dakota Rides**, 1; **Helm and Sons**, 8; **Hot Shot Thrill Rides**, 1; **Iconic Midway Rides**, 3; **Kastl Amusements**, 8; **M&C Attractions**, 1; **Outside Amusements**, 1; **Prime Pacific**, 4; **Ray Cammack Shows**, 15; **Southern Cross**, 2; **Still Tryan**, 1; **Talley Amusements**, 10;

**Wanderlust Amusements**, 2 and **Wood Entertainment**, 1.

Ideal conditions are a bonus for the fair. "Of course, the ocean breeze and climate help, but also the independent midway that allows us to choose the best equipment from the best operators," said **Katie Mueller**, chief operating officer.

To stimulate attendance, the fair put an emphasis on value deals in addition to continuing popular promotions such as kids days and **Pepsi** pay-one-price ride wristbands. New promotions included foodie Fridays (50% off fair-tastic foods finalist items from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Fridays in June).

Game on Fridays (all games for four credits from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Fridays in June); discounted ticket sales at **Albertsons/Vons** stores; discounted ticket sales to military families; additional \$15 value meal deals; season pass options and a fair tripper discount to encourage public transit use on the Juneteenth holiday.

There were diverse entertainment offerings. The fair's first foray into a grandstand electronic dance music (EDM) show, featuring **Zedd**, was one of two sell-out performances. The other was country singer **Jon Pardi**, who drew more than 8,300 attendees. **Foreigner** and **Jordan Davis** were a few of the other entertainers.

Longtime food stand **Country Fair Cinnamon Rolls** sold more than 7,000 of its brand-new Tres Leches cinnamon rolls — nearly 400 per day. Paddock restaurant **Farmer in the Del** also saw an increase in popularity thanks to its "People's Choice" award winner, super volcano fries.

The fair worked with a marketing budget of \$1.2 million. The fair worked with a marketing budget of \$1.2 million. The breakdowns include A I 16%; OOH (Out Of House) 15%; TV/cable 15%; radio 15%; OTT (Over-the-top) 12%; display 7%; streaming audio 6%; promotions 5%; creator 5%; search 4% and local digital 1%. There was no expen-

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VIDEO



► See SAN DIEGO, page 25



**MIDWAYS**



This year, 71 rides were brought in, with 31 being ones designed for the younger set. As an independent midway, rides came from various operators who brought anywhere from one to 15. COURTESY SAN DIEGO COUNTY FAIR

► **SAN DIEGO**  
Continued from page 24

diture for print.

There were three changes to this edition.

“We made some significant layout changes in our buildings that really worked out well. We added a super spectacular ride to what has traditionally only had kid rides that drew people to an area of the fair. We had an EDM show that was sold out,” said Mueller.

“The Fairgrounds this year were remarkably clean — often, spotless. We tried out a lot of new ideas, new layouts, and new concepts,” said Carlene Moore, CEO of the 22nd District Agricultural Association, which produces the annual event. “We fostered an excellent guest experience and responded swiftly to guest feedback. We booked A+ quality entertainment and fun for San Diegans

of all ages, backgrounds and cultures. As a result, we saw smiling faces coming through our gates every day. With savory and sweet treats in hand, they basked in the warm sunshine, the cool nights and the festive atmosphere.”

Established in 1880, the San Diego County Fair welcomes nearly one million

guests each summer, making it the county’s largest and longest-running annual event. The 2025 Fair was open June 11 through July 6, and closed Mondays and Tuesdays, for a 20-day season.

The fair returns for 20 days in June and early July 2026. As of press time, dates have not been set.

• [sdfair.com](http://sdfair.com)



874,263 people visited this year, an average of 44,000 attendees per day at the 20-day event. COURTESY STEFAN HINZ

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# Michigan's annual Alpenfest draws crowds, record midway revenue

AT: Ron Gustafson  
Special to Amusement Today

GAYLORD, Mich. — Despite some rain on the final day, the 60th Annual Alpenfest held July 8 to 12, 2025, reportedly had a record run.

"It was very successful," Courtney Willits, festival vice chair, told *Amusement Today* following the five-day event. "We had a little rain on Saturday during the parade, but everyone stayed."

Sponsored by the Gaylord Chamber of Commerce, the town's main thoroughfare is closed down and transformed into an ethnic street festival with a carnival, music pavilion and a variety of contests.

"The former mayor, who has been at all 60 Alpenfests, told me he had never seen such large crowds," noted Doug Birch, business manager for carnival provider TJ Schmidt & Company, Standish, Michigan. "The crowds — especially in the afternoons — were historic and midway activity generated record revenue. We expanded our footprint this year as another block on the highway was closed for the festival."

Though no official attendance is calculated, Alpenfest reportedly draws around 90,000 guests.

## Mega pass



Alpenfest marked its 60th year in July. The Super Shot drop tower (right) was a favorite on the TJ Schmidt & Company midway. The provider's midway also featured a Sea Ray swinging ship (below). COURTESY GAYLORD ALPENFEST

This marked the 10th consecutive year TJ Schmidt provided rides and concessions for the event. A pre-sale online ride mega pass was offered for \$60 from June 2 to 22. The price bumped up to \$70 from June 23 to July 7.

"We do the deeply discounted advance sales at about a third of our events," Birch said of the offer. "Regular all-day ride passes go for \$30 to \$35 and we also offer some split ride sessions — early and late day."

The carnival sells ride tickets at \$1.50 each, with attractions requiring three to five tickets.

Featured rides by TJ Schmidt include Super Shot (ARM), Sky Quest swing and Sea Ray (Mulligan), Fun Slide (Frederiksen),



Wipeout, Zipper and carousel (Chance Rides), Gravitron, Sizzler, Go Gator and Silver Streak (Wisdom Rides of America), Western Train (SBF/Visa) and Tilt-A-Whirl (Larson).

Other kiddieland attractions include Samba Balloon (Zamperla), umbrella cars (San Antonio

► See MICHIGAN, page 28



The 25-ride midway also featured the Go Gator kiddie coaster. COURTESY GAYLORD ALPENFEST



Alpenfest is a street festival held in Gaylord, Michigan. Burning of the Boogg (above middle) is a popular opening night event at Alpenfest. World's largest coffee break (above right) is also tradition at the annual event. COURTESY GAYLORD ALPENFEST





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The colorful Expo Wheel entertained guests throughout the Gaylord, Michigan, Alpenfest. COURTESY GAYLORD ALPENFEST

## ► MICHIGAN

Continued from page 26

Roller Works), Honey Pots (Larson), tractors (Dalton), and German Fun Haus (Funni Frite).

With 25 rides available, the show moves 18 to 22 pieces each week, according to Birch, who has been with TJ Schmidt for 30 years.

The newest attractions are an Expo Wheel (Wadkins) and a Uni-Glide popcorn trailer.

### Alpenfest entertainment

The Gaylord Alpine Band entertained in the festival pavilion on opening day, along with auditions for Alpen Idol, painting with nature-made brushes and bingo for senior citizens. A traditional highlight was the 10 p.m. Burning of the Boogg, in which participants jot down their troubles on paper and watch them go up in flames.

Alpenfest also hosts the world's longest coffee break in the pavilion along with hula hoop, jump rope

and pizza eating contests.

Tribute bands, a stone-throwing competition and other family-oriented competitions rounded out weekday activities.

A fun walk as well as 5 and 10K runs kicked off the final day of the festival with the grand parade at noon.

"Our committee members work very hard — 12 to 16 hours a day during the festival," Willits said of the dedicated team that coordinates the event. "We're looking to keep the momentum going after the success of this year's Alpenfest."

- [gaylordalpenfest.com](http://gaylordalpenfest.com)
- [tjschmidt carnival.com](http://tjschmidt carnival.com)



The final day of the annual festival featured a grand parade at noon.

COURTESY GAYLORD ALPENFEST



## MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw

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**Wadkins Expo Wheel Inc.** goes above and beyond when the need arises. **TSA Amusements Inc.**, Brooklyn, New York, had torn down from a spot one Sunday evening, headed for the next one for a Tuesday setup. At 1 a.m. early Monday morning, the tractor-trailer driver of their 2017 Wadkins wheel hit something (tree or bridge), causing damage to the number one and number two spokes that were beyond repair. Carnival owner, **Angelo Spotta**, contacted the Joppa, Maryland, manufacturer, explaining their dilemma with only a 24-to-36-hour turnaround.

Without hesitation, the manufacturer sprang into action with **Kevin** and **Roger Wadkins Jr.** driving the parts 170 miles in three-plus hours to TSA's quarters in the city, arriving by 10 p.m. Monday evening. The TSA crew, along with Wadkins overseeing the work, put the ride back together, working throughout the night until completion.

"[This is] probably the fastest [service] I've ever experienced," said Spotta. The Wadkins crew even helped retrofit the lights.

"We were in the carnival business. We understand," said **Roger Wadkins, Sr.**

The 35-ride carnival plays the five New York boroughs. They have had 100% success with the Watkins wheel, along with zero issues.

Spotta has nothing but the highest praise for the manufacturer. "Two thumbs up. They gave us the parts. There are not many like them. Fabulous!"

**Iowa State Fair CEO Jeremy Parsons** has announced a realignment of the fair's organizational structure, including the creation of four strategic teams to help the organization operate more efficiently and prepare for the future. To lead the teams, four individuals were promoted to new roles. The promotions are:

**Jessica Buchheit**, chief financial officer; **Mindy Williamson**, chief marketing officer; **Frank Robey**, chief mission officer and **Randy Jones**, chief safety officer.

The goals of the realignment are to create more levels for employee advancement, reduce the number of direct reports to the CEO/manager, realign departmental responsibilities to other similar areas, position the fair for future financial and organizational growth, and create a basic framework for succession planning. "With the realignment now complete, nearly half of our 75 full-time employees have either acquired a new title, moved to a new office, been given a new job description or have a new reporting structure," Parsons said in a prepared statement. "I am excited by the tremendous possibilities that the realignment will allow us to explore."

Just before the annual **Orange County**

**Fair**, Costa Mesa, California, the fair's board named a new chief executive officer. **James Canfield** succeeds **Michele Richards**, who announced her retirement in January, after 20 years of service.

Canfield most recently served as senior director and general manager of the **Birmingham Jefferson Convention Complex** in Alabama. He also held management roles at convention centers in Palm Springs, Pasadena and Long Beach.

"I am very excited to return to California and to have the great opportunity to lead OC Fair & Event Center into a new era that builds on its rich legacy while advancing innovation and community-focused programming," Canfield said in a news release.

"On behalf of the OC Fair & Event Center Board of Directors, I am very happy to welcome James Canfield as our new Chief Executive Officer. With his extensive experience in managing premier convention and entertainment venues, James is exceptionally well-suited to lead our organization into its next chapter," said Board Chair **Nick Kovacevich**.

Growing up on the midway, all that **Charles Panacek, Jr.**, principal with **Belle City Amusements**, Long Wood, Florida, knows is providing rides for Florida midways. He and his company's roles are evolving. This includes a shorter route, along with a venture into providing equipment repair and reconditioning called **Amusement Ride & Repair Professionals Manufacturing**. Unlike the carnival season, it will operate year-round.

Last fall, **Deggeller Attractions** acquired Belle City's route, which includes the **Jacksonville Fair**, **Florida Strawberry Fest**, **Sarasota County Fair** and the **Charlotte County Fair**. The carnival will now only play summer dates with a route outside the Sunshine State.

Belle City Amusements was created in 1948 by **Charles Panacek, Sr.** in Racine, Wisconsin. The elder Panacek joined a traveling show with a pony exhibit and an eight-ride carnival. Early this century, Belle City acquired **The Mighty Blue Grass Shows**, which greatly expanded its operation.

After several years without a carnival, the board of the **Russell County Free Fair**, Russell, Kansas, hired **Amusement Associates** as the provider of rides for its July 22 to 26 event.

The company, located in Iowa, has been providing family entertainment for fairs, festivals, community events, and corporate picnics for more than 40 years throughout Iowa, Kansas and Missouri.

The fair board said the carnival was possible through a grant from **Russell County Economic Development** and CVB (Convention and Visitors Bureau).





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# WATER PARKS & RECREATION

► World's Largest Swimming Lesson draws thousands — page 31 / Carowinds adult water oasis — page 32

## Kings Island's Soak City debuts WhiteWater racing water coaster

AT: Jeffrey Seifert  
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MASON, Ohio — Soak City, Kings Island's water park, opened its first water coaster this summer. RiverRacers opened on May 24 as the first dual-racing water coaster in the state of Ohio.

Paying homage to both the famous Racer coaster, which debuted at the park when it opened more than 50 years ago, and the Little Miami River, which is popular with tubers and borders the edge of the property, the new attraction took the place of Pipeline Paradise. After 24 years, the double FlowRider had reached the end of its service life and was decommissioned at the end of the 2022 season.

RiverRacers was supplied by WhiteWater West of British Columbia, Canada. It uses tried-and-true Master Blaster technology to propel rafts of two people uphill, seemingly defying gravity. This particular model, with its racing configuration, is known as Blaster Battle.

"It goes back to The Racer, Kings Island's original coaster," said Tony Carovillano, park manager, VP operations. "To be able to have that experience in the water park and have that interaction with your friends is something we wanted to bring to our guests. When you hit that first drop and then get launched up into the top — that's a great experience, but it's also combined with other classic WhiteWhite elements like a constrictor, so you get some Gs coming out of that first turn, then ending with a nice Colorado drop for one last burst of speed."



The new premium cabanas (above) can accommodate 14 guests. RiverRacers starts with a 33-foot drop (right).  
AT/TIM BALDWIN

To participate, guests must first climb 48 feet to the top of the tower. Once at the summit, up to four guests will board a pair of two-person rafts placed on a conveyor belt. When the all-clear is given, the conveyor dispatches the two rafts down the parallel chutes, ensuring an even start for both. Riders first encounter a 33-foot, 47-degree drop, achieving speeds of up to 30 miles per hour. As the rafts climb out of the valley, specially designed water jets on the bottom of the chute propel the rafts 22 feet uphill at a 24-degree angle. Large windows on the side of the chute keep the rafts safely contained, but allow riders to see the competition.

After cresting the hill, the tubes diverge away from each other and enter a mirrored layout of enclosed tubes punctuated with luminous patterns of green and blue stripes — vertical stripes on one chute and horizontal stripes on the other. The rafts then burst into daylight to encounter a constrictor section where riders

will feel increased G-forces as they are whipped through the 180-degree slingshot turn. Another enclosed curve brings the two chutes back together for a final drop as they race to the finish line. From start to finish, thrill seekers will blast their way through 530 feet of slide.

Enhancements to the slide offerings weren't just for thrill seekers. Splash River Junction is a playful new area designed for Kings Island's younger patrons. This zone features an array of interactive slides and interactive elements within its wading pools, ensuring a safe, enjoyable and refreshing experience for toddlers and young children.

Complementing Splash River Junction is Bluegill Lagoon, envisioned as a nostalgic "ol' fashioned swimmin' hole." This addition features a distinctive water tower that has humorously sprung a leak or two. It provides a whimsical and effective means of cooling off on warm summer days, blending leisure with a touch of rustic charm. Since it is designed for the youngest



guests, the lagoon is coated with Life Floor, which provides traction to prevent slips, and cushioning to protect falls.

Bluegill Lagoon also includes six new premium cabanas with upgraded furniture, chaise lounge chairs, stocked mini-fridge, flat screen TV, poolside service and accommodations for up to 14 people. Mobile ordering is available allowing guests to scan a QR code, order food on their phone and have it delivered to the cabana.

For those seeking gentle thrills, Salamander Sliders introduces a collection of new family slides. These slides feature gentle slopes, shallow dips and easy turns, promising smiles and enjoyment for a wide range of ages.

"It's nice how the new attraction ties into that corner of the park now with the Salamander Sliders and several kiddie slides right there, next to family cabanas too," said Joel Yankie, VP of maintenance and construction. "It's a great area where you can plop your family down for the day. There's stuff for the big kids with

Mondo Monsoon, stuff for the family with RiverRacers and junior slides too."

The popular Riverbank Slide Out (formerly Aruba Tuba) has been re-imagined as a destination for medium-thrill experiences. This area continues to offer engaging options for older kids, including a two-person raft ride perfect for shared adventures, alongside two exhilarating body slides tailored for younger riders seeking a bit more excitement.

Beyond the aquatic attractions, Soak City is committed to enhancing the overall guest comfort. The entire park was given a refresh with new paint, more decking and more seating. Visitors will find an expanded array of loungers, chairs and umbrellas strategically placed throughout the park, offering ample opportunities for relaxation in both sun and shade. This increased seating capacity encourages families and friends to unwind close to the action, or to actively partake in the aquatic fun themselves, providing a more inclusive and enjoyable atmosphere for all.

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# World's Largest Swimming Lesson draws thousands to the water

**AT: Pam Sherborne**  
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GLOBAL — The 16th annual **World's Largest Swimming Lesson (WLSL)** was held June 26. Even though the total number of participants was not yet available, **Beth Root**, creator of the WLSL and owner of the communications company **Buzzonic**, said 2025 was another terrific year.

"The numbers are coming in slowly, as they always do," Root said. "While we don't have totals yet, I can share that we've had terrific feedback on this year's event with many locations hosting unique events and/or serving a larger number of swimmers than in past years."

Root said **Disney's Typhoon Lagoon**, Orlando, Florida, once again held the largest WLSL event hosting more than 1,000 students from seven Florida nonprofit organizations including: **Alianza Center**, **Boys and Girls Clubs**, **Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida**, **Girl Scouts of Citrus**, **Elevate Orlando**, **Foundation for Foster Children**, and the **PACE Center for Girls**.

"Coming in a close second was **Dollywood's Splash Country** (Pigeon Forge, Tennessee) with 942 participants for their 15th annual WLSL Water Safety Day event," Root said. "The third largest WLSL was hosted by **Olimpus Natacion Swim School** in Queretaro, Mexico, with 932 participants."

Other notable big water park events included:

**Island Waterpark** in Fresno, California, with 504 participants; **Water World Ocean Park**, Hong Kong, with 410 participants; **Chris Lyle Aquatic Center**, Saint Cloud, Florida, with 309; **Soaky Mountain Waterpark**, Sevierville, Tennessee, with 293 and **Wet 'N' Wild Waterworld** in Anthony, Texas, with 286.

Many facilities also created unique events to serve their communities. For example, the **Funplex** in East Hanover, New Jersey, hosted a special Sensory-Friendly WLSL event in addition to their regular WLSL session. The offering featured instructors trained in sensory-friendly instruction.

**Wild Rivers Waterpark** in Irvine, California, hosted 235 swimmers for Mission Possible - Swimming Lessons Save Lives, a special event conducted in partnership with **MemorialCare Miller Children's Hospital** and the **Jasper Ray Foundation** to support drowning prevention.

**Breakwater Beach Waterpark** in Seaside Heights,

New Jersey, hosted 116 participants while **Captain Jack** the water safety dog stood guard. Then the kids were able to do a meet-and-greet with **Captain Jack**.

**Palm Bay Recreation Department Aquatic Center**, Palm Bay, Florida, partnered with **Health First** and **Palm Bay Fire and Rescue** for their WLSL event, complete with

ladder trucks and the arrival of a rescue helicopter. Lifeguards worked closely with first responders, demonstrating rescue techniques and water safety skills.

Fifteen water parks were first-time WLSL participants in 2025. There are at least eight parks that have held the event for longer than 14 years.

The WLSL is promoted

by the **World Waterpark Association (WWA)** as well as many other organizations. The basic WLSL is a 30-minute free lesson.

Root reported last year that after the 2024 numbers were in, more than 383,000 children and adults in 53 countries on six continents have participated in the WLSL lessons since its inception.

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The new Carolina Harbor Shore Club was ready on opening day to welcome guests 21 and over to an exclusive area in the park. AT/GARY SLADE

## New water oasis, serving adults, opens at Carowinds' waterpark

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina — When **Carowinds' Carolina Harbor Waterpark** opened for the season, it featured a new adults-only swim-up bar. The highly anticipated Carolina Harbor Shore Club is the first of its kind in Charlotte and offers a retreat for those 21 and over.

The 27,280-square-foot gated area offers a sophisticated escape from the lively atmosphere of Carolina Harbor Waterpark and its thrilling attractions. Guests will need to provide an ID in order to gain a wristband that gives them access to the area all day.

The heart of the Shore Club is undoubtedly its expansive 3,577-square-foot waist-deep pool that invites immediate relaxation. Fifty-eight lounge chairs strategically placed around the perimeter offer ample opportunity for sunbathing and unwinding. Beyond the cool embrace of the water, a lawn area beckons with a selection of classic lawn games, providing a gentle diversion for those seeking a break from the aquatic indulgence. Within the pool itself, four high-top tables allow guests to enjoy their drinks while partially submerged, while two long countertops offered additional space for refreshments.

The centerpiece of the club is Paul Metto's Boathouse Bar. The full-service bar was designed with two sides, with one side facing the pool, allowing guests to swim up to the bar. The dry side features a traditional bar setting with barstools, tables and chairs.

The identity "Paul Metto" is likely fictitious and seems to be a pseudonym of the Sabal Palmetto, the official state tree of South Carolina and one of the state's most iconic images.

The drink menu includes beer and wine along with traditional frozen cocktails. Six signature cocktails were created just for Paul Metto's and feature regional-sounding names such as Myrtle Breeze, Coastal Currents and Dirty Myrtle.

Within the Carolina Harbor Shore Club are six new private cabanas for those desiring a higher level of luxury and privacy. Each cabana can accommodate six guests and is equipped with a television, mini-fridge, ceiling fan, comfortable furniture, charging station, two complimentary towels and six bottles of water. For larger parties, the shore club deluxe cabana can accommodate 10. Cabana rentals include a dedicated server and the ability to order food and beverage items from Paul Metto's. Food offerings include wings, nachos, pretzels, pulled pork and house-made chips. A sweet treat platter includes house-made cookies and the chef's choice cheesecake.

"There's a lot of excitement for Carolina Harbor Shore Club," said **Brian Oerding**, Carowinds park manager, just prior to opening. "It's the first time we've provided an elevated, adults-only experience. We expect it will become a new guest favorite, adding value to our season pass and providing an oasis for our adult guests looking to enjoy summer in style."

—Jeffrey Seifert



## NEWSPLASH

AT: Jeffrey L. Seifert

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A new aquatics center planned for Chico, California, was awarded a construction contract in April and construction is expected to begin soon. The facility is to be built on a 10-acre parcel on Garner Lane on land that was donated by **Ken Grossman** and his wife **Katie Gonser**. Grossman is co-founder of the **Sierra Nevada Brewing Company** — the third largest privately owned brewery in the United States.

The center, a project of the Chino Recreation and Park District (CARD), has been in development for more than two years.

The contract was awarded to **Slater and Son** during a special meeting of the CARD board of directors. Slater and Son is a local contractor that has been working in the Chico community for decades.

The contract was in the amount of \$27 million plus contingency for a total project cost of \$30 million.

The center will feature a 50-meter swimming pool with competition blocks and a deep well for diving and a launching waterslide. The center also includes a separate lap pool for recreation and training, a zero-depth recreation pool, a waterslide tower and current river. When not used for competition, the 50-meter pool can hold a floating obstacle course.

Developers are working on a surf park in Newport Beach at the privately owned **Newport Beach Golf Course**. Surf parks are popping up all over the world, but this could be one of the first to located within a few miles of an actual surfing beach. Natural surfing is subject to various conditions caused by weather and wind. A surf park, however, can churn out perfect waves all day long, every day.

The proposed **Snug Harbor Surf Park** plans to use Wavegarden Cove technology which can create up to 1,000 waves per hour in a man-made lagoon.

Building machine-operated waves next to the ocean is similar to building a soccer stadium near soccer players, offering a place they can train consistently in a controlled environment. "By removing Mother Nature from the equation, you also eliminate variables like too low of a tide, too high of a tide, inconsistent waves, lack of swell, wrong swell direction and the like," said **Adam Cleary**, Snug Harbor Surf Park founder and CEO.

Plans for the park include a five-acre surf lagoon, a warming pool, spa, seating area, a three-story clubhouse and athlete accommodations.

The is planned to be 50,000 square feet with a reception area, surf academy, fitness

facility, yoga center, administration offices, staff areas, locker rooms, retail store, restaurant, a coffee bar and snack shack.

The proposed two-story athlete accommodations building will have 20 units with a bed, bathroom, closet and patio facing the lagoon. Currently there are no plans for any other type of lodging or any residential units.

The project requires a major site plan review by the city because of its size and will need city officials to approve a conditional use permit for an outdoor commercial recreational use and for construction of a building of the size proposed, among other things. Public comments were accepted through July 7, 2025.

After nearly 20 years of operation, **Clifton Park Waterplay** in Rotherham, England, is getting an upgrade. The environmentally-friendly revamp will feature a wider range of interactive features while retaining much-loved elements like fountains and paddling pools.

The £900,000 (US\$1.2 million) investment into the popular park will add a six-meter (18-foot) tall "super splash" tipping bucket, along with interactive water play elements designed to provide a more inclusive and exciting experience.

New surfacing will also be added to make the area safer and more comfortable on the feet. A new foot washing station will help keep contaminants from entering the pool.

The revamp also includes an upgraded circulation and filtering system that provides more efficient water and energy usage. Signage will be included to encourage children to learn about water conservation and the environment.

**Williston Water World** in Williston, North Dakota, opened on July 15, 2025, following a decade-long absence. The previous Williston outdoor public pool closed in 2014. The city does have an indoor pool with a waterslide and Flow-Rider inside the **Williston Area Recreation Center**, but the community has been looking forward to an outdoor water park for many years.

The new facility includes a zero-depth recreation pool, flow river, multiple slides and a multifunction pool that can serve as a lap pool, and is equipped with a **Ninja Cross** obstacle course that can be lowered into the water. The pool is also lined with a sun shelf that holds lounge chairs that are partially submerged in two feet of water. The facility is equipped with changing rooms and a concession stand.



# Introducing lateral drift with *Wall Runner*



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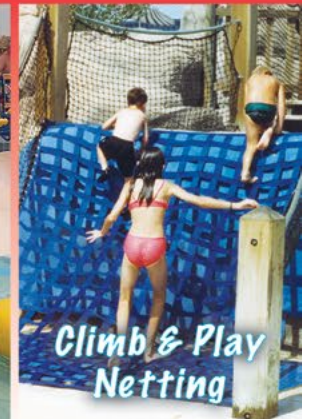
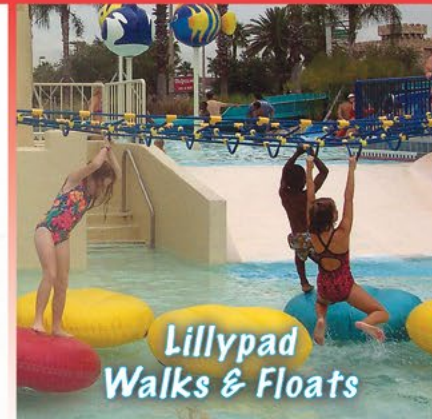
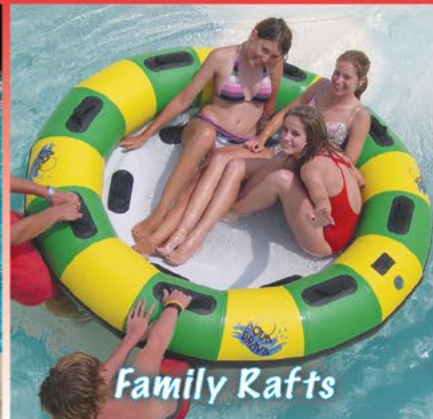


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# BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

► Showtime is magic at Epic Universe — page 37 / Turner Pinball delivers crazy flipper fun — page 38

## Meow Wolf Grapevine adds new revenue stream: Prime Materia

AT: Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

GRAPEVINE, Texas — When **The Real Unreal** opened as the fourth **Meow Wolf** location in July of 2023, the 30,000-square-foot mind trip took the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex down a rabbit hole that delighted audiences with its cosmic wonder and baffling mystery.

Almost two years later, the “art installation” — which fails to describe the FEC meets fun house meets playground entity — has brought in something new. On June 20, visitors wandering its labyrinthian corridors and surreal dimensions can add something more to their exploratory adventure: cocktails!

Prime Materia is an in-exhibition bar within **The Real Unreal**. To see its otherworldly curiosities, customers have to have entered the parallel universe inside. The

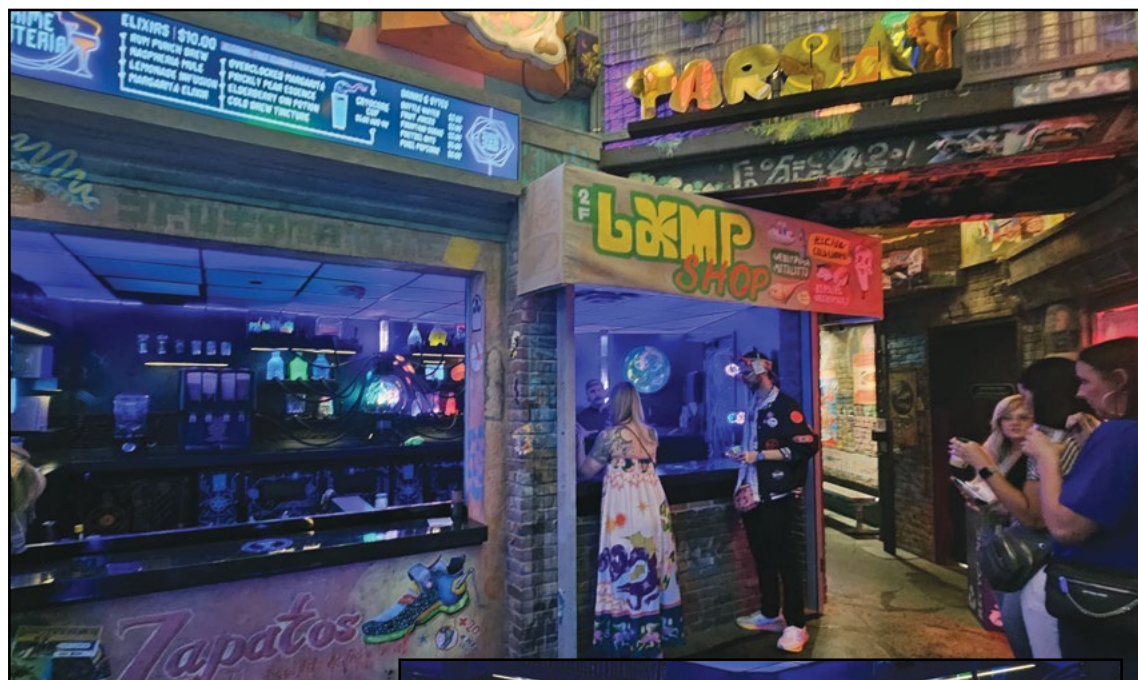
bartenders, called **Gizmo\_Mancers** here, will serve up cocktails and nonalcoholic elixirs with such names as **Overclocked Margaritas** and **Elderberry Gin Potions**.

“Meow Wolf’s newest attraction is at the crossroads of alchemy and circuitry turning rare decoded elements into delicious brews,” or so says **Tommy Schaatz-Thompson**, director of exhibition and facilities.

Once visitors have ordered their drinks, they receive wristbands indicating they are 21 or older and can freely roam about the various dimensions with their cocktails. However, nonalcoholic offerings are available for everyone.

“Prime Materia is an exciting step forward for Meow Wolf Grapevine,” said General Manager **Jamie Weaver-Garia**. “Introducing our first in-exhibition bar allows us to expand how guests engage with **The Real Unreal** while offering something truly unique to the Dallas-Fort Worth area. It deepens the experience, invites repeat visits and shows how we continue to push the boundaries of immersive storytelling.”

And that’s what Meow Wolf is all about — storytelling. Or not. Frankly, the brand has mastered “story interpretation.” There is an underlying storyline in each location, but the guests are the ones who perceive it however they wish and for as long as they wish to



Meow Wolf creatively built a new bar space within the realms of **The Real Unreal** during regular operations. **Prime Materia**, a new revenue stream for the location casts an otherworldly alchemist vibe on the bar to make it fun and engaging.

AT/TIM BALDWIN;  
COURTESY MEOW WOLF



Bartenders, nicknamed **Gizmo\_Mancers**, will concoct stories and tease cosmic mysteries if asked.  
AT/TIM BALDWIN

explore. The experience is nonlinear, so the story is derived through discovery.

When asked what was in the space before **Prime Materia** opened, the bartender will spin a yarn of spatial forces previously untapped and such cosmic-speak — and visitors can have fun with that.

**Connor Gray**, regional PR manager Houston, shared the truth with *Amusement Today*.

“The best part of Meow Wolf is that we grow to enhance Meow Wolf guests’

experiences as much as possible,” he told AT. “We’re strategic in how we build spaces and leave room for future growth at each exhibition. In **Prime Materia**’s case, that space was previously unoccupied aside from the infinite wormhole in the broom closet. The bar itself is behind some metal grating, so we were able to pull the gates down and build the space for weeks behind closed doors without our guests’ experience being interrupted. Less of a speakeasy and more of a buildeasy.”

Behind the bar, throbbing, glowing machines are part menacing and part hypnotic, setting the stage for the blend of alchemy and technology.

When the fifth Meow Wolf location, **Radio Tave**, opened in Houston in the fall of 2024, that property had an interplanetary honky tonk built within, **Cowboix Hevvven** [see AT, March 2025]. While that venue had sit-down booths and hot food items, only packaged snacks

► See **PRIME**, page 39

“It doesn’t feel like a vendor, it feels like a partnership.”

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## ►PRIME

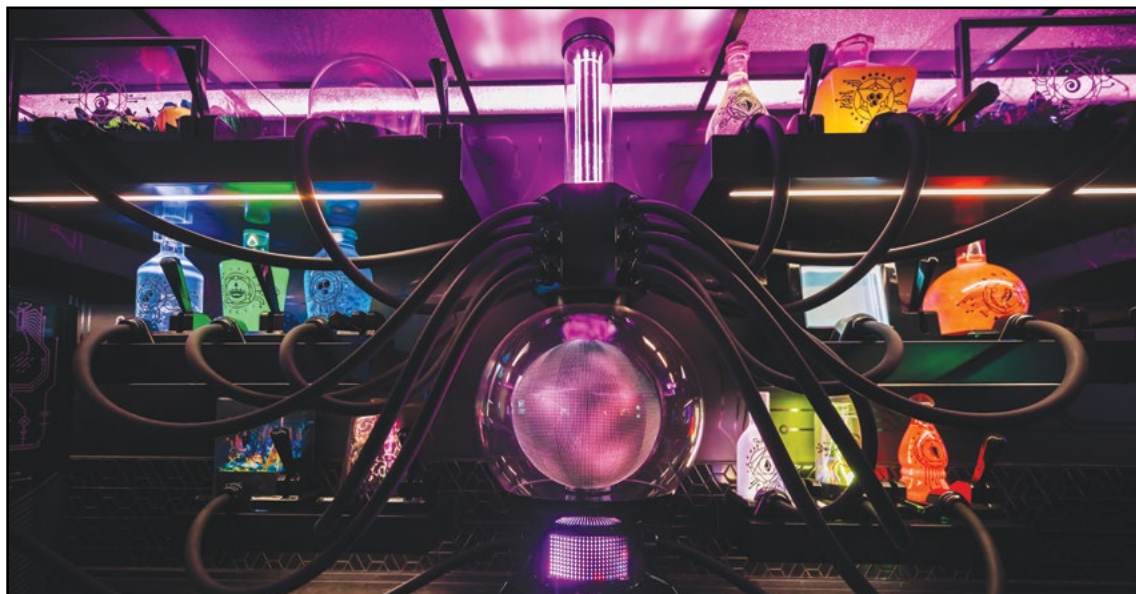
Continued from page 38

are available in Grapevine. It's more of a roam-with-a-cool-drink type of vibe.

"At Meow Wolf Grapevine, there is always a new way to experience and enjoy The Real Unreal. In the two years we've been open, we've continued to add new murals, new interactions, new events and community spaces in our location. Prime Materia is another perfect example of that. We have bar spaces at several of our exhibitions including Meow Wolf Houston's Cowboy Hevvven and Meow Wolf Denver's Sips (with a Z). Each of these locations enhances the story by providing more narrative in the exhibition, more secrets to uncover and a moment to reflect and recharge in the multiverse."

To elevate the fun, special glassware, cryocups, are available to turn one's cocktail into a spectacle.

"A special recipe makes it bubble and create a fog



Gadgets and all sorts of galactic machinery (above) both intimidate and fascinate while drinks are being made. For an additional price, guests can order their cocktails in a cryocup, adding to the fun and providing a souvenir keepsake (right). COURTESY MEOW WOLF

above the drink," said Gray. "Who wouldn't want that? It's a way to enhance the guest experience by not only seeing cool art but also tasting cool art and increasing the ability to interact in our spaces in a way they never imagined before."

The vessel, of course, is a collectible souvenir.

Meow Wolf experiences have no beginning or end.

Guests can investigate and try to solve deep mysteries, or they can simply turn their brains off and weird out. While timed tickets stagger entry, the length of stay is entirely up to them. Half the fun is backtracking to find places previously missed. (Who knew you could walk through the refrigerator??) There are even resting places where travelers can pause

their journey to attempt to comprehend the imagination that blurs reality.

Meow Wolf creates location-based entertainment through artist collectives, paying close attention to local cultures and regional artists. The interactive realms reflect the core values of the company: innovation, creativity, inclusivity, collaboration,



community and excellence. Meow Wolf is committed to giving back to the communities in which their locations reside, as well as a commitment to sustainability. A location is being prepared for Los Angeles in 2026, and an installation in New York will follow.

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# Raising the curtain on Epic Universe's live entertainment offerings

AT: David Fake  
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ORLANDO — When Universal Epic Universe opened in May 2025, it had been nearly 30 years since the opening of Universal's Islands of Adventure — a moment widely regarded as Universal Creative's signal that it was no longer content to simply play in the theme park sandbox.

With Universal Epic Universe, Universal Creative again proved it wasn't merely the debut of another theme park — it was another bold and ambitious creative declaration. Anchored by immersive lands richly themed to beloved properties like Harry Potter, How to Train Your Dragon, Universal's Classic Monsters and Super Nintendo World, the park redefined the boundaries of themed entertainment and technological innovation.

To see where that creative declaration shines most clearly requires looking beyond Universal Epic Universe's cutting-edge rides and intricately immersive environments to the park's two signature entertainment offerings: "Le Cirque Arcanus" and "The Untrainable Dragon."

These live stage shows are far more than air-conditioned interludes between thrills — they are fully realized, emotionally resonant productions that serve as the creative heartbeat of the park.

According to **Catherine Cobbs Digenova**, senior show producer for Universal Creative, that elevation of live performance was intentional from the outset, explaining that "our goal with Epic Universe was to elevate our



**The Untrainable Dragon delivers heart and scale with massive puppets, original music and a flight sequence (right) that leaves audiences breathless — together redefining theme park live entertainment.**

AT/DAVID FRAKE

entertainment program from what we've been able to do in the past and really push the boundaries of what we can do... something really immersive and exciting and heartwarming."

"Le Cirque Arcanus," located within the Wizarding World of Harry Potter — Ministry of Magic, transports audiences into the world of *Fantastic Beasts* with a level of theatricality rarely seen in theme park venues. Drawing inspiration from the traveling magical circus introduced in *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald*, the show follows Ringmaster Skender's bold attempt to revive his fallen enterprise by stealing Newt Scamander's enchanted suitcase. What unfolds is a tightly choreographed spectacle of puppetry, illusion and performance that blurs the line between theatrical craft and



moviemaking magic.

At a time when many parks rely heavily on projection screens and digital overlays, Le Cirque Arcanus offers a rare commitment to practical effects and physical storytelling. The result is a layered live-theater experience that feels both intimate and ambitious — a reflection of Universal Creative's philosophy that every show must begin with narrative integrity. As Executive Creative Director **Steve Tatham** put it, "My direction is always to be focused on the story, then find the best storytellers who can collaborate with us to do that."

Across the park in the Isle of Berk, "The Untrainable Dragon" has quickly become a cornerstone of the guest experience. Originally developed for **Universal Studios Beijing**, this U.S. premiere features an expanded and refined story, new musical arrangements, updated choreography and a suite of advanced technological elements that elevate the production into something genuinely cinematic. Enormous puppets, dynamic flight effects, and seamless integration between stage and screen bring the world of *How to Train Your Dragon* to life in ways that feel more Broadway than theme park.

The production's blend of

artistry and innovation is no accident. Digenova explained that "we've partnered with Tony Award-winning puppetry and set design teams," emphasizing that their focus was never on flashy tech for its own sake, but rather "using technology not as a gimmick, but to create a seamless, emotionally immersive experience." That creative philosophy is what makes moments like Toothless' mid-air flight over the audience feel so breathtaking — not because the audience sees the mechanism, but because they're caught fully in the emotion of the story.

What makes these shows especially powerful is that they serve as a creative pivot — a moment where Universal has reasserted the importance of live performance in an era dominated by screen-based interactivity. It's a bold position to take, and it reflects the team's appetite for creative risk.

"We didn't go the safe route — and that keeps us all engaged," Tatham said of the broader approach to Epic Universe. "It's fun for us as creators, but I think it's also fun for our guests."

That balance — between artistic ambition and crowd-pleasing accessibility — defines the success of both shows. They don't just enter-

tain; they move and challenge audiences of all ages. More importantly, they center the human performers — dancers, illusionists, puppeteers — as vital contributors to the storytelling, rather than background elements in a tech-driven experience.

In fact, the creative team sees this new standard of live entertainment as just the beginning.

"We really made a conscious effort to elevate our entertainment for Epic Universe," Digenova said, "So, I feel like our future is very bright for entertainment."

For Universal, the investment has paid off not just in critical praise and audience response, but in how it positions the brand at the forefront of immersive entertainment. Through these two shows, Epic Universe has demonstrated that technology and emotion aren't mutually exclusive. They can — and should — coexist. Heart and hardware, when properly aligned, can elevate the theme park experience to new creative heights.

For the industry, the message is clear: live entertainment still matters. When combined with innovative rides and immersive worlds, it has the power to move guests, differentiate a park's brand, and create word-of-mouth momentum that no ride can match alone.

As theme parks worldwide continue to adapt and innovate, Universal Epic Universe's flagship shows offer a new blueprint: know your audience, have trust in live performances, and don't be afraid to tell big, emotional stories in compact, surprising ways.

If Islands of Adventure was the moment Universal Creative earned its seat at the table, Epic Universe is where it begins to reshape the rules of the game.

In "Le Cirque Arcanus" and "The Untrainable Dragon," we're not just witnessing high-quality theme park entertainment — we're watching the medium evolve in real time.

On a larger scale, Universal Creative has shown it is not content with merely a seat at the table — it's playing for the crown.



**In Le Cirque Arcanus, technology, puppetry, illusions and magical creatures take center stage in a theatrical spectacular inspired by *Fantastic Beasts*. AT/DAVID FRAKE**



# A new kid on the block, Turner Pinball delivers crazy flipper fun

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

BOERNE, Texas — In the history of pinball, the decades of huge arcades filled with rows of machines changed over time. Many of the big names in the field: **Gottlieb**, **Bally**, **Williams** and others, closed their shops. The decline in pinball production was concerning to fans of the bells, bumpers and sounds of the form of recreation.

Family entertainment centers tend to focus on redemption games, but pinball machines still find isolated spots in arcades, bowling alleys and FECs. Ownership of pinball machines has shifted more toward the home collector.

After the new millennium was well underway, the sport seemed to find a rise in production. **Stern Pinball** was a holdout big player, but others emerged to give new life to the sport. **Jersey Jack** became another sought-after contender. Other passionate people connected with the community, often through the various festivals and expos held globally.

In a short time, a relative



Founder Chris Turner has a deep commitment to a quality machine. AT/TIM BALDWIN

newcomer, **Turner Pinball**, has developed a fan base. Founded near the end of 2022, one of its goals was reliability. Producing a top-quality machine was front of mind.

"In terms of cabinet and playfield construction, we use the finest materials we can get," said founder and CEO **Chris Turner**. "The plywood for our cabinets is a 3/4-inch, 13-ply, with a black laminate liner. Everyone comments on how sturdy the cabinet feels. The cabinet bottom is what you'd find in

fine, custom cabinetry. Ours is so smooth. Plus, the electrical systems and the components that go into that factor into the long-term maintainability. Materials are very important. I think it is the most maintainable and serviceable system out there."

From the beginning, a team of passionate engineers set out to push boundaries of what would typically be found in pinball. Innovation and creativity were goals.

"Our artist, **Brad Duke**, not only knows how to

draw very well, but he also knows pinball," said Turner. "You want the layout to be kind of a combination of something that is easy to approach for someone who hasn't played a lot but also be enjoyable for someone who has more experience."

In 2024, the company introduced its first game, **Ninja Eclipse**, to positive reviews at the Texas Pinball Festival in March. The first edition was limited to 100 games and sold out by October.

In 2025, Turner Pinball introduced **Merlin's Arcade**, its second machine. Themed around the fabled Knights of the Round Table and the villainous Morgan Le Fay — and the wizard Merlin, of course — fans found it a fun machine to play, with attendees at festivals standing in lines to get their hands on the magical flippers.

The game was designed by industry veteran **Jon Norris**, who has more than 30 previous designs on his resume.

Like the first machine, **Merlin's Arcade** comes in

two versions, the **Legendary Edition** (\$8,995) and the **Arcade Edition** (\$6,995). Production of the **Legendary Edition** is limited to 500 units.

When asked if anything was learned from the first machine to the second, Turner said, "We improved a lot of manufacturing processes and made some parts to make the process easier. We learned little decisions in layout: code optimization, layout optimization and manufacturing optimization."

The **Legendary Edition** has extra features: premium sound and RGB speaker lighting, yellow powder coating on legs and glass frame, **Merlin** figure with moving body and arms, **Mordred** and **Morgan** figures with glowing eyes, foosball knight super spinner, two additional spinners, light-up machine toy, pop bumper bobble head toys, barrel physical ball lock with subway, sculpted castles, illuminated topper and anti-reflective glass.

Turner Pinball prides itself on meticulous attention to detail. It makes note of features that set the craftsmanship apart: removable glass frame with standard size tempered glass, connectorless RGB lighting on glass frame, dual flipper buttons with finesse feature and abrasion-resistant playfield surface.

"We have a small team; we're a small company," Turner told *Amusement Today*. "The people who design the machines are the people who are working on them. It's not a huge assembly line. It's a small team of people who really care and make every [machine] great."

•turnerpinball.com



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Fans were lining up to get a chance to play the new **Merlin's Arcade** at the 2025 Texas Pinball Festival. AT/TIM BALDWIN



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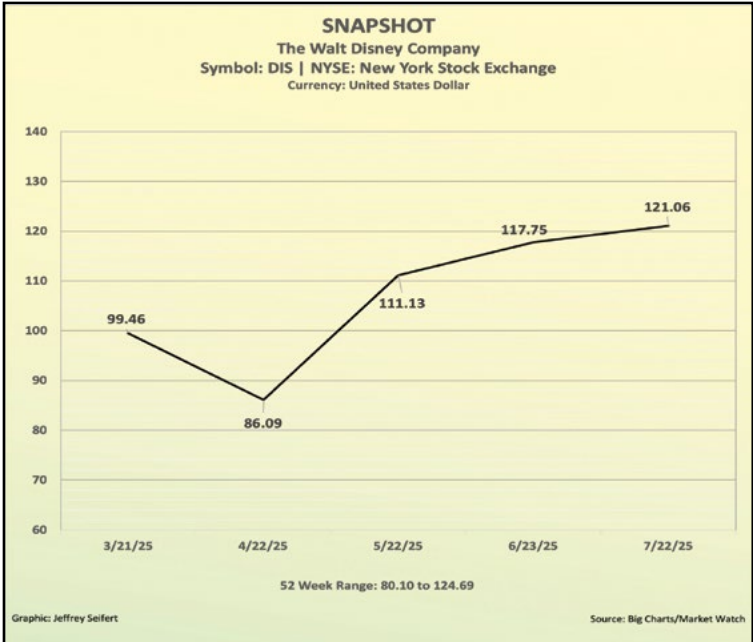


MARKET WATCH

| COMPANY                                                           | SYMBOL   | MARKET | PRICE<br>7/21/25 | HIGH<br>52-Week | LOW<br>52-Week |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|--------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| PARKS AND ATTRACTIONS                                             |          |        |                  |                 |                |
| The Blackstone Group                                              | BX       | NYSE   | 166.69           | 200.96          | 115.66         |
| Carnival Corp.                                                    | CCL      | NYSE   | 29.79            | 30.46           | 13.78          |
| Comcast Corp./<br>NBCUniversal Media                              | CMCSA    | NASDAQ | 35.01            | 45.31           | 31.44          |
| Dave & Busters<br>Entertainment, LLC                              | PLAY     | NASDAQ | 30.53            | 43.73           | 15.08          |
| EPR Properties                                                    | EPR      | NYSE   | 58.42            | 61.25           | 41.75          |
| Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.                                              | JP:9010  | TYO    | 2030.00          | 3195.00         | 1908.00        |
| Haichang Holdings Ltd.                                            | HK:2255  | SEHK   | 0.81             | 1.06            | 0.39           |
| Leofoo Development Co.                                            | TW:2705  | TSEC   | 17.05            | 19.35           | 14.80          |
| Lucky Strike Entertainment Corp                                   | LUCK     | NYSE   | 10.18            | 13.25           | 7.66           |
| MGM Resorts International                                         | MGM      | NYSE   | 37.17            | 43.99           | 25.30          |
| Parks America, Inc.                                               | PRKA     | OTCQX  | 35.00            | 30.01           | 48.25          |
| Royal Carribean Cruises, Ltd.                                     | RCL      | NYSE   | 346.47           | 352.68          | 130.08         |
| Six Flags Entertainment Co.                                       | FUN      | NYSE   | 30.96            | 51.13           | 27.06          |
| Tivoli A/S                                                        | DK:TIV   | CSE    | 618.00           | 710.00          | 586.00         |
| United Parks & Resorts Inc.                                       | PRKS     | NYSE   | 48.64            | 60.83           | 37.68          |
| The Walt Disney Company                                           | DIS      | NYSE   | 120.84           | 124.69          | 80.10          |
| Warner Bros Discovery Inc.                                        | WBD      | NASDAQ | 12.80            | 13.04           | 6.64           |
| SUPPLIERS/OTHERS                                                  |          |        |                  |                 |                |
| Brogent Technologies, Inc.                                        | TW:5263  | TSEC   | 95.00            | 205.50          | 82.00          |
| Falcon's Beyond                                                   | FBYD     | NASDAQ | 7.90             | 13.25           | 3.62           |
| Sansei Technologies, Inc.                                         | TYO:6357 | TYO    | 1590.00          | 1753.00         | 1031.00        |
| Topgolf Callaway Brands                                           | MODG     | NYSE   | 9.62             | 16.89           | 5.42           |
| Daily industry stock information available at amusementtoday.com! |          |        |                  |                 |                |

Worldwide Markets — CSE/DK: Copenhagen Stock Exchange; HK: The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong; JP: The Tokyo Stock Exchange; NASDAQ: National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations; NYSE: New York Stock Exchange; OCT: Over -the-counter stocks; TAIEX: The Taiwan Capitalization Weighted Stock Index; TYO: The Tokyo Stock Exchange; TW: The Taiwan Stock Exchange.

—SOURCES: Bigcharts.com



| DIESEL PRICES        |                         |                        |
|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Region (U.S)         | As of 7/21/25           | Change from 1 year ago |
| East Coast           | \$3.821                 | (\$0.051)              |
| Midwest              | \$3.795                 | \$0.063                |
| Gulf Coast           | \$3.476                 | \$0.015                |
| Mountain             | \$3.770                 | \$0.039                |
| West Coast           | \$4.176                 | \$0.199                |
| California           | \$4.963                 | \$0.089                |
| CURRENCY             |                         |                        |
| On 7/22/25 \$1 USD = |                         |                        |
| 0.8574               | EURO                    |                        |
| 0.7428               | GBP (British Pound)     |                        |
| 147.75               | JPY (Japanese Yen)      |                        |
| 0.7995               | CHF (Swiss Franc)       |                        |
| 1.5340               | AUD (Australian Dollar) |                        |
| 1.3705               | CAD (Canadian Dollar)   |                        |

BUSINESS WATCH

Chuck E. Cheese, Westgate Resorts partner

ORLANDO, Fla. and IRVING, Texas — **Westgate Resorts** and **Chuck E. Cheese** announced a groundbreaking multi-faceted technology and cross-brand marketing agreement, which will expand access to immersive gaming experiences for families visiting **Westgate Town Center** and **Westgate Vacation Villas Resort** in Kissimmee, Florida.

At the heart of the collaboration is the all-new Mystery Fun House Arcade Experience, opening Summer 2025 at Westgate Vacation Villas Resort in Kissimmee, Florida. Powered by Chuck E. Cheese arcade systems and expertise, the interactive space promises to deliver fun and play for all ages, anchored by two distinct Chuck E. Cheese-branded zones. The multi-year marketing agreement allows both companies to grow their customer engagement through cross-company promotions, exclusive offers and benefits.

"Partnering with Chuck E. Cheese — a name synonymous with family fun — allows us to supercharge the launch of our new Mystery Fun House Arcade with world-class gaming and innovation," said **Jared Saft**, chief business and strategy officer for Westgate Resorts. "This collaboration not only elevates the guest experience at our resorts, but also creates exciting new opportunities for our members through exclusive cross-promotions and shared loyalty benefits that deliver real value."

SimEx-lwerks adds nature-based product line

BALTIMORE, Md. — **SimEx-lwerks** announced the launch of a new nature-based product line designed to bring families closer to the natural world through elevated outdoor experiences. This expansion marks an exciting addition to the company's family entertainment portfolio. Nature-based attractions are well-suited for a wide range of destinations, anywhere families gather to explore, play, and connect with nature.

To lead this initiative, SimEx-lwerks welcomed **Gerhard Komenda** as director of nature attractions. With over two decades of experience in designing and building acclaimed outdoor experiences, Komenda brings a deep expertise in eco-conscious construction, natural materials and guest-centered adventure design. SimEx-lwerks has worked with Komenda for many years, including the design and installation of Ariel Adventure Parks at the **San Diego Zoo Safari Park** and **Bronx Zoo**, as well as Nature Trek at the **Bronx Zoo**.

"This new product line will include the Nature Trek experience, no-harness canopy tours and nature play environments," shared Gerhard. "These attractions encourage hands-on exploration and active play, while supporting high capacity and durability."

Grupo Vidanta, Cirque du Soleil partner

MEXICO CITY — **Grupo Vidanta** and **Cirque du Soleil Entertainment Group** announced the premiere of "**Ludo**," a breathtaking show that heralds a new era of immersive entertainment and solidifies **VidantaWorld Nuevo Vallarta** as a benchmark in luxury tourism. The production redefines the boundaries of live entertainment by merging water, storytelling, cutting-edge technology and culinary art into a singular, multisensory format.

"Ludo" will debut December 12, 2025, as Cirque du Soleil's first major immersive water show since "O" in Las Vegas. The show will debut at VidantaWorld Nuevo Vallarta, inside the pioneering **Bon Luxury Theme Park**, the first luxury theme park in Latin America.

"'Ludo' represents a bold evolution for Cirque du Soleil: a production that fuses immersive design and a sensory narrative to cutting-edge technology and culinary art," said **Daniel Lamarre**, president and CEO of Cirque du Soleil Entertainment Group. Every element was created to push the boundaries of live entertainment."



**ON THE MOVE**

**Six Flags Entertainment Corporation** announced that its shareholders elected **Sandra (Sandy) Cochran, Michael Colglazier, Felipe Dutra** and **Steven Hoffman** to the board of directors of Six Flags Entertainment Corporation for three-year terms expiring in 2028.

"I want to welcome Sandy, Michael, Felipe and Steven to our Board of Directors," said **Selim Bassoul**, executive chairman of Six Flags Entertainment Corporation. "Each brings a proven record of success and commitment to excellence that aligns perfectly with Six Flags' core values and business goals."

Cochran served as executive chair of **Cracker Barrel Old Country Store, Inc.** from November 2023 through February 2024. Prior to her role as executive chair, she served in positions of increasing responsibility at Cracker Barrel including service as president and CEO and a director from September 2011 to October 2023, president and COO from November 2010 to September 2011, and executive vice president and CFO from April 2009 until November 2010.



Cochran

Colglazier has served as CEO and a director of **Virgin Galactic Holdings, Inc.** since July 2020 and as Virgin Galactic's president since February 2021. Prior to joining Virgin Galactic, Mr. Colglazier served as president and managing director for **Disney Parks International** from March 2018 until his departure in July 2020.



Colglazier

Dutra is a founding investor and chairman of **Waldencast PLC**, a position he has held since 2021. He previously served as CFO of **Anheuser-Busch InBev** from 2004 through 2020, adding chief technology officer responsibilities in 2014. Prior to that he held several roles in treasury and operations at **Ambev** predecessor **Cervejaria Brahma** and was appointed CFO in 1999, holding that position until the merger with Interbrew in 2004, which led to the creation of InBev.



Dutra

Hoffman currently operates **Python Global Ventures**, a family office investment firm. Prior to that, Hoffman was a partner and consumer sector head at **Highline Capital Management LLC** from 2001 through 2018. He began his career at **Wertheim Schroder & Co.** as an investment banking and private equity analyst starting in 1992.



Hoffman

**Ellis Jacob**, president and CEO of **Cineplex**, Canada's leading entertainment and media company, will retire at the end of 2026. Until Dec. 31, 2026, Jacob will continue to lead Cineplex and assist the transition to a new leadership structure.

"The Board is delighted to recognize Ellis, who has built Cineplex Inc. over the past four decades into one of the world's best operators of movie theaters and family entertainment centers," stated Cineplex board chair **Phyllis Yaffe**. "Ellis is, quite simply, a giant in our industry. It has been a privilege to work alongside him for many years and we

look forward to working with him through this transition."

"After thoughtful consideration, I welcome this next chapter," commented Jacob. "For decades, I have been focused on making Cineplex a great Canadian company, and I move forward with immense pride in what we've built for generations of Canadian movie fans who come to us for those magical moments of escape that can only be found in a true theater experience."



Jacob

**Ellis & Associates, Inc. (E&A)** continues to grow, expanding the fulltime client services team for the third time in less than two years with the addition of aquatics, safety and operations professional, **Adrianne Newman**.

Newman began her aquatics career in 2000 as a 15-year-old slide attendant at **Great Wolf Lodge Wisconsin Dells** and became an E&A certified lifeguard the following year. After working in aquatics through high school and college, and becoming an E&A Instructor, Newman began her fulltime career at Great Wolf Lodge. While a pack member at multiple Great Wolf Lodge locations she held progressively responsible roles in administration, training, aquatics and operations, rising to director of aquatics. During her tenure at **Great Wolf Lodge Kansas City**, Newman's team earned the flagship property's first E&A Platinum Award in 2014.



Newman

After 17 years, she moved to Galveston Island, Texas, to work for **Schlitterbahn** as the director of operations. In 2018, she became an E&A Instructor Trainer. During her career, she also worked for the corporate office of **Goldfish Swim School** as an operations consultant and for **Commercial Aquatics** as the corporate director of safety.

Interactive technology solutions provider **Alterface** is boosting its international presence with three key business development appointments across the United States, Greater China and Korea. The expansion reinforces Alterface's leadership in interactivity, seamlessly blending creative design and technology to craft meaningful experiences for global audiences. The initiative strengthens the company's presence in these vital markets, fosters local partnerships and advance its vision of delivering personalized, immersive and accessible interactive attractions worldwide. To lead these efforts, Alterface welcomes **Mattheis Carley** in the U.S., **Yvonne Yi** in China and **Joseph Kim** in Korea. Yi and Kim operate under the leadership of **Etienne Ducrot**, who oversees business development and operations across the Asia-Pacific region.

"Having dedicated local teams with cultural understanding is critical to supporting Alterface's growth strategy in these regions," stated **Stéphane Bataille**, CEO



Carley



Yi



Kim

of Alterface.

Based in the U.S., Carley is Alterface's partnership director. He has over 15 years of experience in themed entertainment, with a background that includes creating location-based experiences for film franchises in 17 countries. His expertise will be leveraged to build strong partnerships and showcase Alterface's interactive concept design and prototyping services. Carley will help clients create immersive, story-driven attractions, with a specific focus on expanding into the growing FEC and LBE markets.

Based in Shenzhen, Business Development Manager Yi brings comprehensive experience in supply chain management, business development, sales and marketing and company operations.

"I am excited to increase Alterface's brand awareness in China and work with government agencies and state-owned companies to bring our interactive attractions to a wider audience," said Yi.

"My goal is to develop the Korean market for Alterface, bringing our innovative mix of creativity and technology to FECs, LBEs, and large theme parks," added Kim, who'll represent Alterface as Business Development Manager in Korea.

## **Cinergy announces strategic realignment, leadership promotions**

DALLAS — **Cinergy Entertainment Group** announced June 25 a strategic organizational realignment to support ongoing growth, enhance operational excellence and prepare for the opening of its newest entertainment center later this year.

"We are excited about the future of Cinergy and our continued growth," **Rich Schwarte**, president of Cinergy Entertainment Group, said in the release. "We're positioning Cinergy not just for this next opening, but for the next decade, and this realignment ensures we have the right leadership, the right resources and the right mindset in place to scale with purpose — without ever compromising the quality or consistency our guests and teams expect."

The company is implementing new resources to elevate operations. Birdeye is an AI-powered guest feedback platform that will deliver real-time customer satisfaction insights. Paylocity is being used to create a comprehensive digital learning system offering scalable, on-demand training. The Xenia mobile software platform is being deployed for facilities maintenance checklists and inspections. These systems along with additional operational support tools will help Cinergy in its pursuit of operational excellence.

Cinergy is also expanding and sharpening its leadership bench. **Traci Hanlon** has been promoted to vice president of marketing and sales. She will lead the company's growing group events and corporate sales division, with a focus on deepening community engagement and maximizing revenue opportunities. **Tizoc Strong**, previously general manager of **Cinergy Amarillo**, has been named national training manager. **Charles Thornton** joins the company as director of construction, contributing to the development of new facilities, remodel and expansion projects and future site planning.



# Focus *on the* HORIZON

## Alignment, focus, fun drive Cannon

DANBURY, Conn. — Action-packed and action-oriented describe both Thrillz High Flying Adventure Park and charismatic Vice President of Strategic Growth Caroline “CC” Cannon. After working for more than five years in the technology sector, Cannon joined Thrillz to develop and lead the company’s expansion efforts.

“My parents have always been scrappy,” Cannon said. “They have a ‘we’ll figure it out’ mentality they apply to everything they do. When they launched Thrillz, they brought that spirit with them. Today, they own and operate multiple locations and have set Thrillz up well so that we can focus on expanding around the country.

“I started my career on Wall Street, not in the industry,” she continued. “I would have conversations with my parents about all they were doing with Thrillz, but it was their venture and company. Then, during the pandemic, we saw incredible growth as families visited Thrillz and embraced our unique product and experience. Our Connecticut location was able to reopen before many other attractions and locations in nearby New York. Guests flocked to us for something to do, and also had almost overnight viral success from Tik-Tokkers who visited and had fun flying through our harness-free park. Since then, the company continued to grow, and I joined in 2023. Today, I’m so proud of this dream team we’ve created and all we are doing to propel the Thrillz brand forward.”

The always-on nature of the Thrillz operation took some getting used to, and while it could have overwhelmed Cannon, instead, she found it energized and drove her.

“You could say I was built for this industry,” she said. “I truly understand why people are drawn to it and why they love it. I’m happier than I have ever been.

“We are an indoor, year-round operation. We are busy on weekends and holidays,” she added. “I’ve come to understand that anything can happen at any time. I’ve dealt with situations I never expected. At

first, I was surprised by the various situations and things that would pop up. Now I laugh. We react and respond to whatever comes our way. Each day is so very different.”

Expanding an operation that caters to families also requires the support of others, and Cannon credits the industry’s community with providing guidance and friendship.

“Everyone is so generous when it comes to sharing their knowledge and experience,” she said. “The conversations I’ve had with others have been transformative for our business. We are all united by our shared drive, passion for innovation and entrepreneurial spirit. We recognize when one of us succeeds, so too does everyone else.”

Cannon has found a supportive community with fellow owners and operators within the industry and has worked to replicate that by creating a supportive culture for Thrillz employees.

“I am inspired by the opportunity – and responsibility – we have to shape and build someone’s work ethic. The sense of accountability I have to our customers also applies to our team. Our employees come to us from different backgrounds, and often we hire them for their first-ever job. It’s so beautiful to see them come into their own, discover who they are and what they are meant to do as they work at Thrillz,” she shared.

“We are in the service industry, and customer service is the core of our business,” Cannon continued. “It’s an honor to give someone their first role and firsthand experience working with the public. We give our employees the opportunity to be responsible and accountable. These are core skills that can be applied in school and their personal and professional endeavors. I’m proud to be a part of a business that provides jobs and opportunities to the next generation. We can help give them a solid foundation they can build upon for the rest of their lives.”

Cannon also recognizes that some of her employees may look to Thrillz and similar attractions to further their career paths. As a vol-

## Caroline ‘CC’ Cannon Thrillz High Flying Adventure Park Danbury, Connecticut



unteer member on the IAAPA FEC Committee, Cannon proudly helped launch the IAAPA Foundation FEC Scholarship program.

“I am ‘Thrillz-ed’ to be part of this initiative,” she said. “This is a great way to help others network, connect and learn more about this industry. This industry has done a lot for me and for my family. It has allowed us to become successful business owners and to chart our own path. I want others to see that anything is possible.”

As Cannon leads the strategy for Thrillz’s next chapter of growth, she says it’s important to keep the best interests of the business at the center of every decision. “This industry is going through a period of unprecedented growth and innovation,” Cannon shared. “It hypes me up every time we explore new products and activities for our guests. As we continue to build our brand and core offerings, it is possible to become distracted or consider implementing the first new product or solution that comes our way. Balancing

steady decision-making while innovating is an exciting challenge.”

Cannon’s sights are set on expanding Thrillz to more locations across the United States. “We’re living in an unpredictable time,” she said. “However, regardless of what is happening in the world, families will always want to make memories together. At Thrillz, we give families access to innovative, fulfilling fun in a safe environment. We provide entertainment and activities that can’t be replicated at home. We do it well, and I’m excited and honored that others are recognizing our product and brand. My goal is to provide the gift of Thrillz to as many people as possible.

“There is no secret sauce to success,” Cannon concluded. “It is OK to not have everything all figured out. I believe that when you find what makes you happy, anything is possible, and the opportunities that follow are limitless. This industry creates happiness for others. I can’t think of anything more fulfilling, or fun, to be a part of.”

—Susan Storey



# SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

► Great White surges back with updates — page 45 / Chance Rides announces all-electric eTrams — page 50

## Rye Playland continues operations with Zamperla assistance

AT: Pam Sherborne  
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

RYE, N.Y. — **Playland Park**, Rye, New York, has been on a roller coaster of its own over the past several months, but with the efforts of **Westchester County**, owner and operator of the park, the park continues building its offerings and pleasing guests amid the roll out of entertainment.

**Peter Tartaglia**, the county parks department deputy commissioner, said that going from not knowing if the park was even going to open in 2025 just months ago to where they are now, he is very happy.

"We basically went from zero to having multiple rides up and running," he said.

According to the park's website, there were, as of the third week of July, 22 rides operating.

And Tartaglia said they were opening other rides all the time.

"I don't know," he said in late July. "We may get another one open this weekend."

Not only have they been opening rides all along this season, Tartaglia said they have been able to bring back the popular Friday night fireworks show. That started on July 4 and will run Friday nights through August 29.

"We have added vendors and other entertainment," he said. "We have brought back some of our older vendors."



With the hot temperatures, the Playland Park beach has been very popular this year (above). **Dragonator — Zamperla Disk-O** attraction — is open at Playland Park for the 2025 season (below). COURTESY PLAYLAND PARK/PETER TARTAGLIA

In addition, Playland beach and pool are both open seven days a week through Labor Day, from 11 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

With all this being said, Playland Park did have a rough start to the year. The company that had a 30-year contract to operate the park, **Standard Amusement Company**, announced in late January it would be exiting its management contract to run the historic park after having been on site for only three years.

There was very little time for the County of Westchester to try to figure out how to proceed. By May 1, Westchester County Parks, Recreation and Conservation Commissioner

**Kathy O'Connor** put out an emergency order in an effort to expedite the opening of the park for the 2025 operating season.

The emergency order issued on May 1 stated that "it will allow the county to hire a company to inspect specific rides, secure all necessary supplies and parts to operate the rides, repair and thereafter maintain the rides."

It went on to state that due to the former operating company's abrupt departure, it left the county with "little time to properly carry out all of this work."

"Due to the urgent nature of the situation, the Parks

► See RYE, page 44



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QUEUE GATE SYSTEMS  
PICTURED: PNE PLAYLAND, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA





## ► RYE

Continued from page 43

Department determined that competitive bidding could not be pursued," it stated.

The parks department then selected **Zamperla, Inc.**, to carry out the necessary emergency work, which included inspecting, repairing, replacing and maintaining the rides and procuring supplies and parts.

The \$1.7 million deal with Zamperla to repair and maintain Playland's rides runs through Sept. 30. At that point, Tartaglia said, Zamperla's contract will be over.

Tartaglia said, as of now, the county doesn't plan to bid out another operating contract.

"We will do what we have done for years and that is operate the park



Playland Park has welcomed guests since 1928, and city officials plan to keep it operating themselves in the years to come. Zamperla's Red Baron attraction (above right) is one of the 22 rides currently operating at the facility in Rye, New York, as of July 22. COURTESY PLAYLAND PARK/PETER TARTAGLIA

ourselves," he said. "That doesn't mean that we won't be looking for partners and collaboration from other companies like Zamperla."

The County of Westchester and Standard Amusement are currently in arbitration.

Tartaglia said Zamperla was a good fit for them this year. The county owns about 11 rides.

"We needed parts and expertise to get these rides up and running," he said.

"Zamperla took our call right away and had a team here and started working quickly. They still have a small crew here."

Tartaglia said they also drew expertise from within the parks department and even some from the former park operator.

"It just all came together," he said.

They also had to quickly pull employees together, he shared.

"We didn't have much



time, but we held three very successful job fairs," he said.

Pulling HR personnel from both the parks department offices and overall county offices, Tartaglia said they ran the fairs from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

"We had everything there that we needed," he said.

Depending on the positions, there was fingerprinting available and drug testing, all under the one roof.

Frank Carrieri is the

park's general manager.

Tartaglia said admission to the park is free with \$15 all-day ride wristbands. There is a \$10 parking fee.

He knows the park has a way to go, but the camaraderie shared to get the historic facility back open this year felt great.

"This park has been a part of my life for 40 plus years," he said. "I worked 16 of those years at the park."

•playlandpark.org

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# Great White surges back into 2025 with new trains, updates

**AT:** Pam Sherborne  
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WILDWOOD, N.J. — When officials at **Morey's Piers** in Wildwood, New Jersey, decided to purchase new Millennium Flyer trains from **Great Coasters International Inc.** (GCII) to go onto the Great White wooden roller coaster, it began a series of update events.

That series of updates started in the fall of 2024, and continued through the Great White opening over Memorial Day weekend for the 2025 season. With a few tweaks here and there throughout the first of the season, the Great White is thrilling guests with its jaw-dropping experiences along with a smoother ride.

"The updates we did to the Great White were not so much as ongoing updates, but more of things we had to do to get the new trains," said **Mike Granigan**, director of construction, Morey's Piers.

Some of the changes had to be done to fit the modern trains on a 1996 wooden coaster, while some were

changes that happened since they were already doing the other things.

All of the work was done by GCII.

Granigan said they had to rebuild the lift hill in order for it to accept the new trains.

"While we were doing that, we decided to go ahead and replace all the wood on the lift hill," he said.

Then they decided to make a change in the braking system. The coaster was built with all pneumatic brakes.

"But while we were replacing the wood, we took the opportunity to change out the trim-braking system, the main stopping brakes, to magnetic brakes," Granigan said. "The new magnetic brakes have made it a lot smoother. And while we were doing that, we decided to also change out the control system."

Because of the new trains, a needed update came in the form of replacing the queue gates.

"The spacing of the new trains are different than the



When officials at Morey's Piers decided to replace the old trains on their Great White wooden roller coaster, they soon realized there were other changes that had to take place in order to fit the new Millennium Flyers trains (right) by Great Coasters International, onto a 1996 coaster. COURTESY MOREY'S PIERS



old ones, so we had to have new gates," Granigan said.

They also ended up changing the transfer track. The old one was made of wood, so GCII replaced that construction with steel.

"With the steel transfer track, it is now much easier for us to see, have access to and inspect wheels," Granigan said.

The tweaks to the coaster this season were the wings on the train and the effort to limit the access of

passengers reaching out with their arms.

"We ended up having them extended higher," Granigan said.

And that seems to have the last ticket punched, hopefully, for this year.

Granigan said the park has been receiving a lot of positive reviews from guests about the new upgrades.

"They love it," he said. "It is a lot smoother, which is why we made the changes to begin with."

He said with the original 1996 trains from **Philadelphia Toboggan Company**, there were six, four-person cars on the train, each having two axles that had to be pushed

► See GREAT, page 47



The coaster also received new queue gates due to the new spacing of its new trains (above). Some tweaks were made throughout the season, including extending the wing panels of the cars to restrict passengers reaching outside the trains (below). COURTESY MOREY'S PIERS



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### Keeping rides running smoothly, even as temperatures rise

During the summer, much of the safety focus centers on employee heat risks, but amusement equipment faces its own set of challenges. Extreme heat can cause premature wear, breakage and even injuries if rides aren't properly maintained. Below are a few tips straight from a manufacturer. **Precision Chains** specializes in engineered chain systems that keep rides operating safely and reliably, even under high-pressure conditions like summer heat.

Every ride has its own unique setup, but one challenge is universal: heat. Hot weather can change the way chains perform. It accelerates wear, breaks down lubricants faster and exposes mechanical weaknesses that may not show up in cooler conditions. Choosing the right materials is only part of the solution; maintenance on site plays a crucial role in keeping systems safe.

Lubrication is one of the most common chain failure issues. Standard oils that perform well during cooler months can evaporate or thin out under sustained heat, especially on outdoor rides exposed to direct sunlight. We recommend high-temperature synthetic lubri-

cants for these conditions. They retain their viscosity and protect critical components from dry running, which is one of the fastest ways to wear out a chain system.

Thermal expansion is another area where problems can occur. Heat causes metal to expand, and if this is not managed, it can affect chain tension and alignment. A chain that appears correctly set in the morning may become too tight or too slack as temperatures rise, placing strain on the drive system and increasing failure risk. We encourage operators to monitor chain movement closely during peak heat and make small tension adjustments as needed.

Cleanliness also becomes more important during the summer season. Outdoor rides collect dust, moisture, sunscreen residue and other debris that combine with lubricants to create grime. This traps heat, increases friction and hides early signs of wear. Even a well-built chain cannot perform if the running conditions are compromised. The importance of regular cleaning schedules during high-use periods

cannot be stressed enough.

It's easy to get distracted when the park is full of guests, receiving ride maintenance calls and keeping up with daily checklists. It is also important to take extra precautions during the summer season with lubrication schedules, alignment checks, and following maintenance best practices based on real ride data and operational feedback. For parks using auto-lubrication systems, frequent checks are recommended on oil flow and reservoir conditions, particularly during warmer months when build-up or blockage can occur.

Summer doesn't just bring higher visitor numbers; it's a stress test for every system. It brings operating conditions that test the limits of mechanical systems, especially chains. How they're maintained on-site makes the difference between running well and running into problems.

Learn more from Precision Chains and other leading manufacturers at the **AIMS International Safety Seminar**, January 12-16, 2026, in Orlando, Florida. Visit [aimsintl.org](http://aimsintl.org) for details. Scholarship opportunities are available.

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Other enhancements to the Great White roller coaster included a new lift hill and new trim magnetic brakes. COURTESY MOREY'S PIERS

## ► GREAT WHITE

Continued from page 45

around the track. They now have 12, two-passenger cars, each one having its own independent axle.

"They can be lined up," Granigan said. "Instead of having to push a rectangle through a curve, they are all lined up, which creates a much smoother ride."

And if the passengers are having a smoother ride, that means that the trains are not banging up the wooden track as much. And, hopefully, that will mean that there is less wear and tear on the track leading to less maintenance.

The Great White, with a classic out-and-back design, features a 110-foot-tall drop, a tunnel under the boardwalk and scenic seaside views. It is located on Adventure Pier.

That tunnel is one of the ride's signature features. The ride begins with a 25-foot drop down into the dark tunnel. After exiting, trains climb the 110-foot-tall lift hill before dropping 105 feet at speeds reaching 50 mph. The ride goes off the boardwalk toward the beach, swooping back and forth. There are a series of three short airtime hills.

This ride was built over the beach due to space restraints on the pier, a feature that has made it all the more thrilling.

It was originally built in 1996 by Custom Coasters International.

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## Paultons Park partners with Air Ambulance charity



NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK, U.K. — Paultons Park has committed to support the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance as the charity reaches the halfway point in its Operation Airbase fundraising target. As one of the theme park's three premium charity partners, the Air Ambulance charity will benefit from fundraising activities at the park and donations from visitors. The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance is an independent charity that brings an advanced Critical Care Team to the most seriously ill and injured patients in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The charity funds a helicopter and emergency response vehicles that enable highly skilled pre-hospital doctors, pilots and paramedics to quickly attend to emergencies and give patients the best chance of survival and recovery. Paultons Park also supports Lymphoma U.K. and Young Lives vs Cancer as premium charity partners. COURTESY PAULTONS PARK

## PortAventura World increases commitment to accessibility and inclusion of visitors with autism

TARRAGONA, Spain — PortAventura World is reinforcing its commitment to individuals with autism through two major initiatives. First, the park is introducing the character of Julia, *Sesame Street*'s first character with autism, to the family-friendly SésamoAventura area. In addition, the park is implementing accessible signage with pictograms, developed in collaboration with the Tarragona-based association *Todos en Azul* and the *Centro Aragonés para la Comunicación Aumentativa y Alternativa* (ARASAAC). These initiatives aim to enhance the experience of visitors with autism and promote greater visibility of neurodiversity.

Julia is a young girl with autism who is sensitive, creative and passionate about drawing. For the first time in Europe, she appears in

a special performance in SésamoAventura, where she showcases her artistic talent alongside other beloved Sesame friends. This initiative seeks to normalize, through entertainment, different ways of communicating, feeling and interacting with the world.

"Julia's arrival represents so many children who, like her, see and feel the world differently. We want them to feel seen, welcomed and understood," stated Choni Fernández, director of sustainability, customer and communications at PortAventura World. "With her, and with the new pictograms, we continue building a PortAventura World where diversity is not only included, but proudly embraced. We are very proud of our collaboration with *Todos en Azul*

and ARASAAC, which undoubtedly allows us to continue learning and giving visibility to the community."

These initiatives are part of a long-standing commitment to supporting families with diverse needs. Through the PortAventura Foundation, the resort supports projects such as PortAventura Dreams Village, which offers free stays to families with children suffering from serious illnesses. In addition, the resort has strengthened its commitment to accessibility with measures like hearing loops and visual technology developed with Visualfy, as well as specific benefits for people with disabilities, including free admission, adapted access, personalized assistance, and mobility services.

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# Chance Rides announces the launch of new, all-electric eTrams

WICHITA, Kan. — **Chance Rides, LLC** recently announced the launch of its all-electric eTrams — a next-generation transportation solution designed to meet today's evolving mobility demands. Partnering with Swedish-based **EVX Mobility**, Chance Rides brings Swedish-engineered innovation and solutions to the market with a vehicle that upholds the same quality and durability the company's larger trams — now enhanced with clean, quiet and energy-efficient operation. Prioritizing sustainability, performance and passenger comfort, the eTram represents a modern evolution in people-moving technology.

"At the core of every eTram is a powerful electric drivetrain engineered for maximum efficiency and minimal environmental impact," said **Dr. Jay Aguilar**, global vice president of business development at Chance Rides. "With the addition of roof-mounted solar panels,

these vehicles extend range and reduce downtime, providing operators with a dependable, eco-friendly transportation solution."

Designed for seamless navigation across diverse environments — from winding zoo paths and shaded theme park walkways to bustling college campuses — the eTrams deliver a smooth, near-silent ride, enhancing passenger experience while minimizing disruption in crowded areas. With zero emissions and integrated solar power, these vehicles actively support environmental goals and promote sustainable operations.

"With over 60 years of experience in ride systems and people movers, Chance Rides continues to lead through innovation, reliability, and sustainability," said **Aaron Landrum**, president and CEO of Chance Rides. "The all-electric eTrams reflect our commitment to high-quality engineering and long-term serviceability.



The standard eTram passenger power unit accommodates up to 11 riders (right), while pairing with a trailing unit more than doubles capacity (above). COURTESY CHANCE RIDES



This launch marks a significant step forward in our mission to help shape the future of transportation."

Engineered for comfort and accessibility, the eTrams boast spacious seating, extra legroom and near-silent operation, ensuring a

smooth and relaxed passenger experience. With low-floor entry, these vehicles provide seamless access for wheelchairs and mobility aids. The standard passenger power unit accommo-

dates up to 11 riders, while pairing with a trailing unit doubles capacity to 24 passengers, making eTrams an ideal solution for high-traffic, continuous routes.

•[chancerides.com](http://chancerides.com)



# Pennsylvania amusement ride safety advisory board hold meeting

**AT:** B. Derek Shaw  
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HARRISBURG, Pa. — Recently, representatives from the amusement industry, along with community volunteers selected at large, met at the **Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture** headquarters in early June for a quarterly meeting of the **Pennsylvania Ride Safety Advisory Board**. Feedback from this body is used to help the Bureau of Ride & Measurement Standards determine its course of action on each piece of equipment in the ride approval process. **Tammy Luckenbill**, bureau director, ran the meeting.

There were six ride/equipment approvals to come before the advisory board. Three were approved, one conditionally approved, one no action and one tabled until proper documentation is received.

**Hersheypark** added a 40-seat Screamin'

Swing dubbed Twizzlers Twisted Gravity, from **S&S Worldwide**, of Logan, Utah. The high thrill pendulum ride has a static height of 137 feet, currently the tallest in the world. It travels up to 68 mph, going past horizontal, pulling up to 4Gs maximum. There were a great many people in attendance during commissioning (prior, the ride was granted tentative approval). Reviews have been quite favorable.

Their attraction has four sets of ride compartments, which handle ten people each. The ride can run one side only, if needed. Approval was granted with **Toni Rossi** abstaining, as he put in the original proposal when employed at Hersheypark.

A major modification was made to Kingdom Coaster at **Dutch Wonderland**. The **Custom Coasters Inc.** 55-foot wood coaster was modified with

Titan Track from **Great Coasters International**. The all-steel section, from the station to the lift, was riveted, not welded. It is the first installation of this type of track in Pennsylvania. Accelerometer tests showed no difference between wood and steel. The department said Titan Track would be considered a major modification due to the different track configuration at each park.

**Experimental Systems Inc.** installed a ropes course for **Victory Valley** children's camp in Zionsville. The conditional approval is dependent upon safety netting for the attraction.

Ride importer **Fun Attractions Inc.** has a portable ride called Pirate Ship Ahoy. It is available in both trailer and ground mount models. No action was taken since no operator in Pennsylvania (or elsewhere) has ordered one. The company thought,

if they were approved, it would generate sales. The board needs a complete submission, with detailed specs and compliant with ASTM-F24 and PA 139 guidelines.

**Powers Great American Midways** recently purchased a 22-meter **Levent Lunapark** wheel. The ride, made in Turkey, operates with a **Siemens** control system that automatically provides uniform distribution of passengers. Much of the ride discussion focused on the 50 hertz (hz) system used elsewhere around the world versus 60 hz which is standard in the United States. Approval was tabled until proper documentation is received by the department.

The Steel Curtain, a 220-foot **S&S Worldwide** roller coaster at **Kennywood Park**, was shuttered for 13 months due to excessive vibration requiring structural reinforcement. Measures included extra concrete, trusses

and supports in specific areas where fatigue level was higher. Post-weld treatment for weak areas will prolong fatigue life. The Steel Curtain reopened after significant strain gauge testing, as well as acceleration testing.

"On behalf of Kennywood and the City of Pittsburgh, [we are] happy to have this ride back," said **Michael Reitz**, director of engineering and maintenance for former **Palace Entertainment** venues. [Complete coverage can be found in the July 2025 issue of *Amusement Today*, on page 58: "Kennywood's Steel Curtain reopens after 13-month modifications."]

The remaining 2025 dates for the quarterly ride safety advisory board meetings are September 18 and December 2. All meetings start at 10 a.m., lobby conference room, Department of Agriculture, 2301 North Cameron Street, Harrisburg.



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# Dollywood's classic Blazing Fury reopens at after enhancements

AT: Pam Sherborne

psherborne@amusementtoday.com

PIGEON FORGE, Tenn. — A familiar phrase, “Fire in the hole,” is ringing out once again from guests at **Dollywood**, Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, as the park’s popular Blazing Fury roller coaster reopened with its new enhancements on July 4.

The indoor coaster/dark ride, which originally opened in 1978, reopened with a celebration that included appearances from Dollywood officials, as well as firefighters from the **Pigeon Forge Fire Department**. The coaster tells a story of a fire sweeping through an 1880s town.

While the heart and spirit of Blazing Fury remain unchanged, guests are noticing the enhancements throughout the ride.

“We were really pleased to have been able to do this,” said **Pete Owens**, Dollywood’s vice president of marketing and public relations. “Our goal has been to maintain the integrity of the ride and bring it up to date.”

For the refurbishment, Dollywood commissioned **Great Coasters International Inc. (GCII)** to install a special version of its Titan Track on part of the ride.



Dollywood's Blazing Fury (above left) reopened July 4 after a number of enhancements which included bringing in Great Coasters International to install a special version of its Titan Track on part of the ride as well as updated trains (above right) courtesy of RMC. COURTESY DOLLYWOOD



“With the part of the track GCII installed this past year, we have replaced virtually 100 percent of the track, and they have done it all,” Owens said.

In addition, the waterfall area got a complete rebuild and characters inside the ride received new costumes. Signage was also updated.

Owens said they were able to modernize the audio system, so now guests have a much better sound than that

of the 1970s they had before.

“I think the biggest things the guests are seeing in the updates is the entry queue,” he said. “We changed the logo and reworked the entry.”

The trains were also updated by **Rocky Mountain Construction**.

“The couplings on the trains were updated and the cars received some engineering and re-engineering,” he said.”

The park closed Blazing

Fury at the end of the fall season in 2024 and had the enhancements completed by July 4.

Owens said guests have really responded positively to the updates. Blazing Fury, he said, has been a generational ride.

“We have had grandparents, parents and, in some instances, great-grandparents be able to ride this with their families over the years, and we have tried

to keep its integrity,” he said. “It is certainly a treasure for us, and we feel we are the stewards of it.”

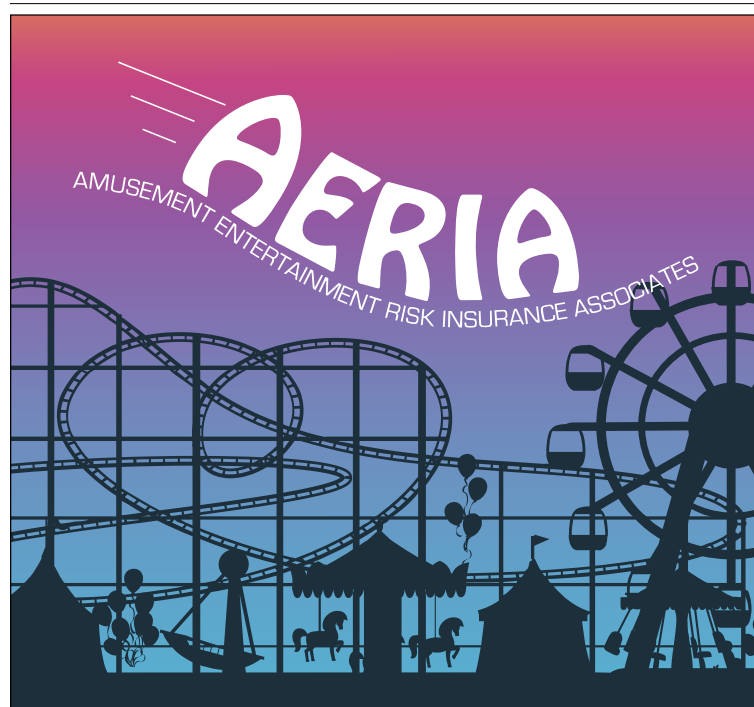
During the opening ceremony in July, Dollywood Parks and Resorts President Eugene Naughton stated: “Blazing Fury is an iconic Dollywood attraction, and we are glad we were able to finish our work in time to open it on July 4th during our 40th season.”

He also said he was proud of the teams who worked on this project, but also: “I’m even more proud to ask our local heroes, members of the Pigeon Forge Fire Department and their families, to be the first ones to ride.”

Which they did.

The Blazing Fury coaster was built to resemble the original Fire in the Hole coaster at its sister park, **Silver Dollar City**, Branson, Missouri. In 2023, park officials at Silver Dollar City, owned by **Herschend Family Entertainment**, decided to build an entirely new ride with the same name. It opened in 2024.

Officials at Dollywood, which is owned jointly by Herschend and **Dolly Parton**, decided to keep the original building. They expect the enhancements to extend its life well into the future.



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► **CLASSIFIEDS**  
Continued on page 55

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#### CONTACT:

**Tyler Renner**  
Wildlife World Zoo  
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# CLASSIFIEDS

## OPPORTUNITY



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CONSERVANCY

### AMUSEMENTS MECHANIC NEEDED

Full Time, Manual Labor • New Orleans, La., U.S.

**Salary Range:** \$19.00 To \$21.50 Hourly

**Summary:** The Ride Mechanic is responsible for maintaining the rides in safe working order.

**Essential Duties and Responsibilities** (Other duties may be assigned):

- Ability to recognize and understand ASTM standards as they apply to amusements rides.
- Performs visual inspections of assigned rides and attractions.
- Maintains, erects, repairs, and trouble-shoots various theme park rides and attractions.
- Visually inspects and listens to machines and equipment to locate necessary maintenance.
- Removes and/or replaces worn or defective parts using hand and/or power tools.
- Performs routine preventative maintenance on various equipment including rides and attractions.
- Keeps a daily duty log of maintenance work performed and accurate records of preventative maintenance.
- Maintains a safe and clean working environment.
- Performs other job-related duties as assigned.
- Ability to read and interpret blueprints and schematics.
- Working knowledge of PC software — Microsoft Word, Excel, Power Point, etc.

#### Qualifications and education requirements —

##### REQUIRED:

- At least 4 years experience in the mechanical or electrical field
- Electrical control experience is necessary to work on amusement rides
- Experience in pneumatics, valves, gears, electrical circuitry, engines, electrical motors, starters, etc.
- Able to establish and maintain an effective working relationship with fellow employees
- Excellent customer service skills
- Interpersonal skills to deal effectively with all business contacts
- Professional appearance and demeanor
- Ability to effectively communicate in English, in both written and oral forms
- Excellent trouble-shooting abilities.
- Must possess the mental and physical capacities necessary to perform the primary job duties
- Must be able to obtain NAARSO/AIMS Level 1 Mechanical certification upon first available testing.
- Flexible work schedule to include nights, weekends and holidays

##### PREFERRED

- Post-high school training in related field
- Ability to diagnose and understand programming faults with PLCs
- Trade school certification
- Welding experience
- Previous experience working in the amusement park industry with NAARSO/AIMS Certification

**Sustainability Goals:** City Park employees must strive to decrease our environmental footprint by continually seeking ways to reduce waste and energy usage, care for natural Park habitat and wildlife, and to serve as models to our patrons to do the same through education and example.

**Physical Demands:** The physical demands described here are those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions. While performing the duties of this job, the employee will be required to constantly required to move from one worksite to another, communicate with others to exchange information, use repetitive motions with the wrists, hands, and/or fingers, operate machinery or power tools, and operate motor vehicles or heavy equipment.

The employee will be required to occasionally climb ladders, stairs, and the like, move in different positions to accomplish tasks in various environments including tight and confined spaces, remain in a stationary position, often standing or sitting for prolonged periods, and assess the accuracy, neatness and thoroughness of the work assigned. The employee may also be required to balance, stoop, kneel, crouch, reach, push, pull, grasp, talk, or hear. Specific vision abilities required by this job may include close vision, distance vision, color vision, peripheral vision, depth perception and ability to adjust focus. The physical demands will require the employee to constantly lift or move objects up to 20 lbs. and occasionally lift or move objects up to 100 lbs. or more. Must be able to work weekends, evenings, and holidays. Must be willing to work a flexible schedule.

**Work Environment:** The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions. While performing the duties of this job, the employee is constantly exposed to outside weather conditions, including wet and/or humid conditions, low and high temperatures, and rain and wind, and occasionally be exposed to moving mechanical parts; high, precarious places; fumes or airborne particles; toxic or caustic chemicals; extreme cold; extreme heat; risk of electrical shock; explosives and vibration. The noise level in the work environment is loud. Hazardous conditions may occur.

#### COMPETITIVE BENEFITS PACKAGE!

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